NATION

17 dead, 18 hurt in Nagpur explosives factory blast

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

'India to buy Russian oil if US-Iran conflict drags on'

≫ Page: 7 ≪

SPORTS

SA beat Zimbabwe by 5 wickets, to face NZ in semis

≫ Page: 8 ≪

www.twitter.com/EnglishSalar
www.facebook.com/EnglishSalar
www.instagram.com/dailysalarenglish
youtube.com/@dailysalardigital

SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

سالار روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 2 MARCH 2026 | MONDAY | BENGALURU | 12 RAMADAN, 1447 H | Vol 5 | Issue No 54 | Pages: 8

Israel-US assassinate Iran's Khamenei

200+ dead; Iran picks cleric Arafi as interim leader; strikes rock West Asia

DUBAI, 1 MARCH

As explosions continued to rock Tehran on Sunday, Iran said that its Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the Israel and US strikes. Iran has appointed an interim leader, Alireza Arafi and said that it will appoint a new Supreme Leader in two-three days.

Iran retaliated to the strikes, launching drones and missiles at dozens of US bases in the region, while President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu both said that the strikes on Tehran would continue.

Iranian officials said that at least 200 people were killed since the US and Israeli bombardment began on Saturday, although the Washington-based Human Rights Activists said more than 300 were killed, and estimated the toll to be much higher.

At least three US servicemen were killed by Iranian drone strikes, United States Central Command (CENTCOM) said on X. At least five others were seriously injured, it said, without providing details.

Meanwhile, at least nine people were killed by Iranian strikes in Israel and 120 injured. Three were killed in the United Arab Emirates as Iranian drones also rocked Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar. An Indian national is among 58 people who sustained minor injuries in UAE. Meanwhile, Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard threatened to launch its "most-intense offensive operation" ever. "The most-intense offensive operation in the history of the armed forces of Iran will begin in moments, targeting (Israel) and American terrorist bases," it said.

Israel Defence Forces released a video showing airstrikes targeting what it called the 'headquarters of the Iranian terror regime' and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) command centres; Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei —*SCREENGRAB/PTI*

THE SUPREME LEADER IS DEAD

Iran announced a 40-day state of mourning after confirming Khamenei's assassination. The 86-year-old Shiite leader who ruled Iran from 1989, had previous attempts to his life, including during the 12-day war with Israel last June.

The semiofficial Fars news agency reported that several relatives of Khamenei were also killed in the Israel-US strikes, including a daughter, son-in-law, daughter-in-law and grandchild.

As news of his demise broke, Iran and the world erupted in both joy and sorrow, a testament to how Khamenei was simultaneously revered as a religious leader and anti-colonial figure while despised as a dictator who killed thousands.

The killing of Khamenei and several top security officials creates a leadership vacuum, increasing the risk of regional instability.

'MOST EVIL PERSON IN HISTORY'

Trump, who announced Khamenei's death on Truth Social before Iran, called the Ayatollah "one of the most evil people in history". He said that the time has come for Iranian people to take the country back into their own hands – a signal that the strikes were for regime change and not because of Iran's nuclear enrichment programme. Israel and US struck Iran just days after Tehran and Washington's nuclear negotiations ended without a deal.

A LONG WAR?

"You have crossed our red line and must pay the price," Iran's parliamentary speaker, Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, said in a televised address. "We will deliver such devastating blows that you yourselves will be driven to beg."

"If they do that", Trump responded, "they will be hit by a force that they have never seen before."

Trump, who campaigned against wars, said that strikes would continue for weeks, or longer if necessary.

Netanyahu said thousands of "terrorist targets" will be struck soon. —*Agencies*

>>*More on Pg 2,3, 5, 6, 7, 8*

Khamenei loyalist Larijani emerges as key power broker

Veteran Iranian politician Ali Larijani has risen to prominence in Iran's security hierarchy following the death of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. Appointed Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) last August, Larijani manages Iran's nuclear negotiations, regional ties, and internal security. A trusted Khamenei loyalist from a leading clerical family, he has recently visited Oman and Moscow to advance diplomacy. Previously parliament speaker (2008–2020) and chief nuclear negotiator (2005–2007), Larijani played a key role in the 2015 nuclear deal. Sanctioned by Washington in January for directing crackdowns on anti-government protests, he condemned armed unrest while advocating pragmatic engagement on nuclear talks. Analysts describe him as a cautious, influential strategist balancing loyalty and diplomacy. —*Agencies*

K'TAKA STARTS EMERGENCY CENTRES

BENGALURU, 1 MARCH

The Karnataka government has fully activated the State Emergency Operations Centre (SEOC) and all District Emergency Operations Centres (DEOCs), functioning round the clock, following widespread Middle East airspace closures that have disrupted international flights.

Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda said the move was directed by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah amid ongoing flight suspensions after several countries issued NOTAMs.

According to the Ministry of Civil Aviation, airspace over Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Oman, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, the UAE and Qatar remains closed until March 2. Many passengers, particularly in the UAE (Dubai), have been stranded.

The Karnataka Resident Commissioner has activated the Karnataka Bhavan team in New Delhi for coordination and is liaising with the MEA's Rapid Response Cell.

Residents have been urged to follow local advisories, contact Indian missions and register on the Sarthi Sahayata portal. — PTI

Karnataka helpline numbers: 080-22340676/ 080-22253707

ICONIC PLACES HIT

Dubai's iconic 7-star Burj Al Arab hotel and Palm Jumeirah are engulfed in flames after being hit by Iranian drones —*SCREENGRAB*

Indian airlines cancel 350 flights

NEW DELHI/CHENNAI/ KOCHI, 1 MAR

Indian airlines cancelled 350 international flights on Sunday as operational disruptions continued for the second day due to the escalating Middle East conflict.

Air India and IndiGo have also cancelled their flights that use these airspaces. Earlier, Civil Aviation Ministry in an X post said that 444 international flights were expected to be cancelled on Sunday due to airspace restrictions over Iran and parts of the Middle East.

Air India said Sunday morning it had cancelled a total of 22 international flights, besides 28 it had announced on February 28 due to the Middle East crisis. According to SpiceJet, 33 flights to and from the UAE have been cancelled. At least 225 flights were cancelled at Delhi and Mumbai airports on Sunday.

As many as 18 international flights operating between Chennai and Gulf countries have been cancelled, sources in the Chennai Airport said.

A majority of flights scheduled to the Gulf regions remain cancelled from four international airports in Kerala including Cochin International Airport Limited and Calicut International Airport. —*PTI*

Passengers sleep on the floor in Mumbai airport after flights were delayed on Sunday —*PTI*

> **We could hear the sounds of interceptions overhead. A few hours later there was an explosion very close to where we were holed up at Dubai airport. My coach was barely about 100m away when it happened**
>
> —PV Sindhu, Badminton player, on the ordeal at the Dubai International Airport

India assures visa relief to stranded foreign travellers

India has urged foreign nationals impacted by Middle East travel disruptions to contact the nearest Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO) for visa extensions or stay regularisation. The Ministry of External Affairs said assistance will be provided to those whose travel plans were affected by flight cancellations following US and Israeli strikes on Iran. The number of stranded tourists in India is not yet clear. —*PTI*

Partial lunar eclipse to be visible in India on 3 March

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

A total lunar eclipse will take place on 3 March, 2026, offering many parts of India a chance to view the celestial event. A lunar eclipse occurs when Earth passes directly between the Sun and the Moon, casting a shadow during a full moon. During totality, the Moon turns red due to Rayleigh scattering of sunlight through Earth's atmosphere, creating a "Blood Moon". There are three types of lunar eclipse: total, partial, and penumbral. The total eclipse begins at 4.34pm IST and ends at 5.33pm, with the eclipse visible in most areas at moonrise. In Chennai and Kanniyakumari, it will be visible for up to 31 minutes. The last eclipse in India was in September 2025, and the next will be partial on 6–7 July, 2028.—*Salar News*

Iran targets US carrier USS Abraham Lincoln

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) claimed to have struck the USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) with four ballistic missiles on Sunday. The US Navy and CENTCOM have denied any damage. The nuclear-powered Nimitz-class carrier, over 1,090ft long, carries 5,000 personnel and 85–90 aircraft. Operating in the Arabian Sea since January, it features a 4.5-acre flight deck, hospital and radio station.

Oil tanker with 15 Indians hit off Oman coast

Fifteen Indian nationals were among the 20-member crew of the Palau-flagged oil tanker Skylight when it was struck about 5 nautical miles north of Musandam's Khasab Port, off Oman's coast. Four crew members were injured. The vessel was evacuated safely. The attack follows earlier drone strikes in Oman. Iran claimed an oil tanker was sinking in the Strait of Hormuz.

Internet hit in J&K amid protests

Internet services have slowed in parts of Jammu and Kashmir as protests erupted on Sunday following the death of Ayatollah Khamenei. Usersreported reduced mobile data access, while X account Kashmir Weather Forecast tweeted, "Mobile Internet Not Working." This comes ahead of a planned shutdown tomorrow. Schools and colleges have been closed for two days. >>>*More on Page 3*

SHIAS MOURN IN B'LURU

Shias protest near Bengaluru's Johnson Market on Sunday against the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ali Khamenei —*MOHAMMED ASAD*

2ND IN 3 DAYS

Pak drone enters LoC in J&K, Army shoots it

JAMMU, 1 MARCH

Indian Army troops opened fire early Sunday after a suspected Pakistani drone entered the Indian side from across the Line of Control (LoC) in Poonch district, officials said. The drone, first spotted around 6.10 am in the Digwar area, hovered briefly before returning to Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). Over a dozen rounds were fired to bring it down, but the drone escaped unscathed.

A search operation was launched to ensure no air-dropping of weapons or narcotics had occurred, officials added. This marks the second incident in three days involving suspected cross-border drone movement in the area.

On 27 February, troops also detected and fired upon a suspected drone in the same forward areas of the Gulpur belt. The object later moved back across the LoC without causing damage.

Officials said these measures are part of ongoing vigilance along the LoC to prevent illegal aerial intrusion and maintain security in the sensitive border region. —*PTI*

- This is the second time drone incursion in three days in the same area. It comes amid heightened tensions with Pakistan as well as Islamabad's war with Afghanistan

Modi, Carney set to meet today and bolster ties

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Canadian counterpart Mark Carney will hold wide-ranging talks on Monday to deepen cooperation in trade, energy and critical technology, as both sides seek to reset strained ties. Carney, who arrived in New Delhi after meetings with industry leaders in Mumbai, was received by Union Minister Jitin Prasada and accorded a ceremonial welcome.

The talks come amid West Asia tensions and are expected to cover the regional situation. Movement on civil nuclear cooperation, including India's proposed uranium procurement from Canada, is likely. The leaders may also push to conclude a comprehensive economic partnership agreement. Relations had deteriorated after the killings of Khalistani leaders. —*PTI*

CM: Efforts on to bring stranded Kannadigas back from Middle East

CM condemns killing of Khamenei, says 2 MLAs are safe in Dubai

BENGALURU, 1 MARCH

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Sunday said that efforts were underway to bring back Kannadigas stranded in the Middle East as he condemned the US-Israel's assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei.

Siddaramaiah told reporters in Shivamogga that the State government was in constant touch with officials and the Ministry of External Affairs to ensure the safety of Indians stuck in Dubai due to flight disruptions.

"The war that is being waged -- in my opinion, the war that America has carried out on Iran -- is unnecessary," Siddaramaiah told reporters.

"On one side, they speak about peace, the Americans, President (Donald) Trump; on the other side, they wage war. This is a contradictory stand. I strongly condemn this," he said.

Speaking about Khamenei, Siddaramaiah said, "We are seeing that Khamenei has been killed. I strongly condemn this. I pray that his soul attains eternal peace."

He said the State government had initiated steps to ensure the safety of Kannadigas stranded in the Middle East due to the closure of airspaces and airports.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah —X/SIDDARAMAIAH

"I have spoken to our Chief Secretary, our Principal Secretary, and also to our Assistant Commissioner in Delhi. The airport in Dubai is shut down. As soon as it is opened, efforts will be made to safely bring them back," he said, noting that at least 30 people from Ballari district were stranded.

When reporters pointed out that JD(S) MLC SL Bhojegowda was also stranded in Dubai with his family, Siddaramaiah said, "I spoke to Bhojegowda. He said he is safe and is staying at a hotel."

Similarly, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar urged the Centre to ensure that Indians stranded abroad were safe.

"We are urging the central government to ensure the safety of lakhs of people from Kerala and Karnataka and from other places stuck there," he said.

"Two of our MLAs Bharath Reddy and AC Srinivasa—are there (in Dubai). They are coordinating. I am also trying to get in touch with them," he added.

'NOT SEEN SINCE 2ND WORLD WAR'

Separately, Home Minister G Parameshwara noted that "From Chikkaballapura district, around 150 people — all of them schoolchildren and college students — have gone there."

Parameshwara also condemned the attacks on an Iranian school, which killed at least 85 people, he said.

"We have not seen this kind of situation after the Second World War. Now it is picking up — one country after another. It should not be escalated in the interest of humanity," Parameshwara said.

'WE HAVE DONE IT BEFORE'

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said that that the situation was turbulent, but the Centre was doing its best.

"We have successfully brought everyone back during the war in the Modi government," he claimed.

Former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai said that US-Israel's conflict with Iran must be resolved through talks and rather than war.

"Given the presence of nuclear capabilities both parties must engage in negotiations to prevent a catastrophic loss of human life," he added.

MLC CALLS FOR URGENT MEASURES

In a letter to Siddaramaiah, Shivakumar and Chief Secretary Shalini Rajneesh, Congress MLC Dinesh Gooligowda urged the State government to take urgent action for citizens stranded abroad.

He urged the State government to appoint Nodal Officers to oversee rescue operations, coordinate with the Centre and ensure that the designated team has constant communication with the stranded Kannadigas.

He noted that several MLAs, including Agricultural Minister N Cheluvarayaswamy were on a foreign trip. —*Salar News*

PHOTO: X/SIDDARAMAIAH

Chikkaballapur village visited by Khamenei grieves

ALIPURA, 1 MARCH

The Chikkaballapur village Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei visited forty years ago was inconsolable following his assassination.

Alipura villagers, who named a hospital after the Shiite leader, could not hold back their tears during a special prayer organised at a Shia mosque to mourn Khamenie's passing away.

Many villagers had visited Iran, and some had family members who settled there for higher education and employment. Residents said that Alipura had a direct connection with Iran.

Of the 30,000 residents of the village located some 70km from Bengaluru, majority are Shias.

Residents observed silence, and shops and commercial establishments voluntarily closed. All celebrations and public events have been suspended to maintain a peaceful environment.

Khamenei visited Alipura in 1986, following an invitation, residents said.

After that visit, the bond between the village and Iran strengthened significantly, they said.

The mourners wore black outfit, held black flags and took out a march condemning the killing of Khamenei, who was reportedly killed in the shelling. —*PTI*

Passengers stranded at KIA amid mass cancellations

BENGALURU, 1 MARCH

Several passengers were left stranded at Bengaluru's Kempegowda International Airport on Saturday after multiple flights to Middle Eastern destinations were cancelled amid escalating tensions between Iran and Israel.

The disruptions follow widespread airspace closures across parts of West Asia, affecting international travel routes.

Rashid Khan, one of the stranded passengers said that he was scheduled to travel from Delhi to Bengaluru and onward to Abu Dhabi, but now his plans have been cancelled.

Another passenger at the airport said uncertainty continues over when operations will resume.

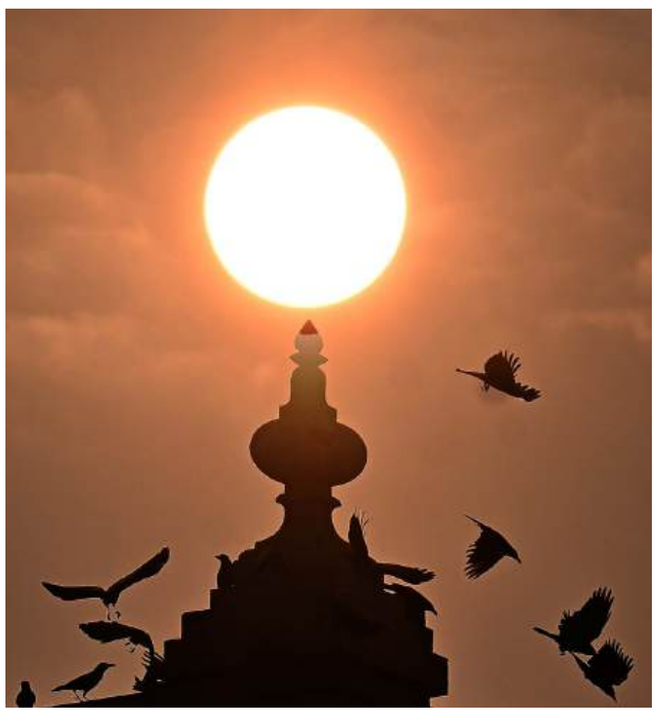
The cancellations come amid heightened hostilities in the Middle East after coordinated military strikes involving Israel and the US targeted Iranian sites, triggering retaliatory threats and airspace shutdowns in Iran, Israel and

Iraq. The conflict has led to major disruptions in global aviation, with airlines suspending services to Gulf destinations as a precautionary measure.

Earlier, several carriers, including Air India, Air India Express, and IndiGo, announced the temporary suspension of operations to and from the Middle East, citing safety concerns.

At Bengaluru airport, airline counters witnessed long queues as passengers sought clarity on alternative travel arrangements. —*ANI*

SUNRISE IN B'LURU



Birds enjoy a sunrise atop Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru. Bengaluru is witnessing hotter than normal weather for this time of year, with temperatures ranging between 20-33°C on Sunday —MOHAMMAD ASAD

Haveri college student barred from exam over fees, bike seized

HAVERI, 1 MARCH

A Haveri college allegedly denied a second year PUC student her hall ticket and seized her bike, preventing her from writing the crucial board exams.

Sunita, a teacher at the private college BAJSS College in Ranebennur taluk, allegedly told the science stream student, Sara Jessica, that she would be allowed to write the exam only if the pending fee of Rs 30,000 was paid, despite the student's pleas.

On Saturday morning, the day Jessica was due to write the Kannada language exam, Sunita allegedly refused to issue the hall ticket until the fees were cleared.

Sunita defended her actions, asking if the college can provide free seats to people.

Notably, Sunita, a science teacher at Government Higher Primary School in Ranebennur.

She is now under investigation for also working at a private college.

BAJSS College in Ranebennur taluk —BAJSS

On learning about the issue, social activist Hanumanthappa objected to the actions of the college management and Sunita, demanding that the hall ticket be issued immediately.

"The student was permitted to take the examination only after her motorcycle key was confiscated as security," Block Education Officer (BEO) Shyamsundar Adiga told Salar News.

A report has been submitted recommending disciplinary action against Sunita for misconduct, citing her behaviour as inappropriate for a government servant. —*Salar News*

Blaze guts Bengaluru godown; third fire in one week

BENGALURU, 1 MARCH

A massive fire gutted a godown at the City's Anjanapura on Sunday morning, the third major fire in a week. The blaze broke out at a large mattress manufacturing warehouse and quickly engulfed the entire facility.

A Kerala-registered lorry parked in front of the warehouse caught fire and five vehicles parked nearby were reportedly reduced the ash.

Thick black smoke engulfed the surrounding areas, making breathing difficult for residents nearby. Two apartments near the warehouse were evacuated as a precautionary measure as fire department officials rushed to the spot to douse the flames. No casualties were reported. Earlier, at least 20 shops were gutted on Wednesday Chikpete's Kumbarapete. Another on Tuesday gutted 30 seized vehicles parked next to Banaswadi police station. —*Agencies*

A Kerala-registered lorry parked in front of the warehouse caught fire in Bengaluru on Sunday —SCREENGRAB

Priyank presents AVGC-AI vision at B'luru GAFX 2026

BENGALURU, 1 MARCH

Karnataka is positioning the AVGC sector at the centre of its AI-driven creative economy, with a focus on intellectual property creation, responsible AI adoption and large-scale skilling, state Minister Priyank Kharge said on Sunday.

Speaking at the valedictory ceremony of Bengaluru GAFX 2026, Kharge, who holds information technology and biotechnology portfolio, outlined a comprehensive roadmap to transition the state from a services-led ecosystem to one driven by original IP ownership and global storytelling leadership.

"The Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) sector today is not just about animation or gaming, it represents digital exports, cultural influence, youth employment and India's creative soft power in a rapidly evolving AI-driven world," he said, underscoring the sector's growing strategic and economic importance.

The minister said artificial intelligence (AI) was transforming animation and gaming workflows through faster concept creation, automated processes, dynamic environment generation and reduced production timelines.

He noted that AI tools could lower production costs by 25-40 per cent in certain animation processes, enabling smaller studios to compete globally. —*PTI*

POLICE ORGANISE ANTI-DRUG DRIVE IN B'LURU, MYSURU

Thousands of participants at the Karnataka State Police Run in front of Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Sunday, showcasing strong public enthusiasm and support —MOHAMMAD ASAD

BENGALURU/ MYSURU, 1 MARCH

The Bengaluru City Police organised an anti-drug awareness drive on Sunday morning as part of their ongoing campaign against substance abuse. State Home Minister G Parameshwara attended the event and praised the department's efforts to combat drug misuse.

"The police department, for the last two to three years, has organised this run. This is to create awareness regarding drug abuse," Parameshwara said. "This drug menace is increasing all over India, and of course, Karnataka also. We find so many innovative programs to create awareness. In fact, the police department is going to every school and college to create awareness among the students. And this is another way of creating awareness and also involving the public in this."

- The event aimed to promote a green Mysuru, a drug-free State, & greater awareness of cybercrime

ACTORS JOIN IN ON MYSURU MARATHON

Actors Yuva Rajkumar and Amrutha Iyengar joined hundreds of people in a 10km marathon hosted by the Mysuru Police from the Mysuru Palace premises.

Mysuru district incharge Minister HC Mahadevappa, Mandya DC Kumara and Mysuru DC Lakshmikanth Reddy were also present.

The event aimed to promote a green Mysuru, a drug-free State, & greater awareness of cybercrime, while also encouraging senior citizens to stay active. —*Salar News*

Newlywed couple dies in Haveri car accident

HAVERI, 1 MARCH

A newlywed couple was killed when their car collided with a parked lorry on National Highway 48 near Kadahalli village in Shiggaon taluk, Haveri district. Two others sustained serious injuries in the accident. The deceased are identified as Karthik, 34, a florist, and his wife Aishwarya, 30, both residents of Haveri. The couple died instantly due to the impact while returning from temple prayers. The injured were rushed to Karnataka Institute of Medical Sciences in Hubballi, with their condition described as serious. Fire brigade personnel and locals carried out rescue operations and removed the bodies. The police inspected the scene, registered a case. —*ANI*

HELIBORNE QUEST

Rare mineral survey in Raichur sparks concern

RAICHUR, 1 MARCH

A heliborne survey by the Mines and Geology Department to detect rare mineral deposits sparked curiosity and concern residents in Raichur district, long known as the 'Land of Gold' for its contribution to the nation's gold production.

The survey is being carried out over the Maliyabad forest area on the outskirts of the city, sources said.

Raichur is home to the Hutti Gold Mines, which produces around 1,700 kg of gold annually.

Following reports of rare mineral deposits in parts of the district, the Department initiated exploration to identify precious minerals.

"The government will receive a report. If it is in favour of the public and in the interest of maintaining a good environment, we will welcome it. If it is against the welfare of the people, we will definitely oppose it. We will not allow such mining activities in Raichur district," Minister for Science and Technology and Minor Irrigation NS Boseraju said.

The survey, known as a Time Domain Electromagnetic and Magnetic Geophysical Survey, is reportedly being conducted from 10 February to 30 April across parts of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka under the supervision of the Remote Sensing and Airborne Survey Division of the Geological Survey Department in Bengaluru.

The survey is a non-invasive method that maps subsurface resistivity and magnetic properties to identify mineral deposits, groundwater, and geological structures.

The operation runs daily from 6am to 6pm, with the helicopter flying at altitudes ranging from 200 to 1,000 feet at speeds of 40 to 50 nautical miles per hour, sources said.

The helicopter, fitted with drone cameras has drawn the attention of locals, with some expressing apprehension over possible mining activities.

Raghuveer Nayak, a resident of Raichur, said that the helicopter had been circling for three days.

"We, the people of Raichur, request the State and Central governments that if any precious metals are found here in future, there should be no harm to the environment. If anything is found and excavation is undertaken, you must take the local people into confidence before proceeding. This is our request," he said. —*PTI*

Kashmir, other states see pro-Khamenei protest

Shia mourners take to the streets; Declare 3-day mourning period; Muslim bodies to protest on Monday

LUCKNOW, 1 MARCH

From Kashmir to the rest of India, Shia mourners took to the streets on Sunday to express outrage and grief over the death of Iranian supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in a US-Israel strike.

Khamenei was killed in an airstrike in Tehran on 1 March during a joint Israel-US attack on Iran. There was a wave of protests and mourning across the world, including India.

Kashmir with 15 lakh Shias, witnessed major protests at Lal Chowk, Saida Kadal, Budgam, Bandipora, Anantnag and Pulwama.

The protesters were seen beating their chests as they shouted anti-US and anti-Israel slogans.

Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah expressed deep concern over the developments in Iran and appealed for calm amid widespread protests.

Abdullah said that his government is in close coordination with the Union Ministry of External Affairs to ensure the safety the state's residents in Iran.

People protest against the alleged killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in an US-Israel strike in Srinagar on Sunday —*PTI*

People from the Shia Muslim community stage a protest against the alleged killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, near a mosque in Jammu on Sunday—*PTI*

PDP president Mehbooba Mufti said the killing of Khamenei marks a "deeply tragic and shameful" point in history..

She said the explicit and implicit given Muslim countries to the killing was even "more disgraceful".

Many Muslim bodies and organisations across the country announced a multiple-day mourning period and scheduled their protests on Monday as well.

In Uttar Pradesh's capital, Lucknow, scores of people gathered near the Bara Imambara mosque and shouted slogans during the protest.

The Shia community has declared a three-day mourning, during which people will wear black, hoist black flags at their homes and organise special prayers.Punjab saw protests and effigies being burnt in Ludhiana. Shahi Imam Maulana Mohammad Usman Rahmani Ludhianvi demanded that the Centre declare a week-long national mourning. Condolence meetings were also organised at Dargah in Dorai and Taragarh in Ajmer.

Scenes of distraught and sloganering were witnessed in New Delhi, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Telangana. —*PTI*

Efforts on to bring back Indians: Centre

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

Union Minister Pralhad Joshi on Sunday said the Centre was making continuous efforts to ensure the safe return of Indians stranded amid the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

Joshi said he would take up the matter with the concerned authorities in New Delhi.

He cautioned that conditions in the region remained unstable.

"Currently, the situation there is turbulent. Even flying a plane there is dangerous," Joshi said.

Meanwhile, anxiety gripped several families in Uttar Pradesh as they struggled to contact their loved ones, including students and Islamic scholars, living in Qom in Iran. At least eight people from Barabanki are presently in Iran for religious studies.

Relatives said contact with some of them was established for a brief time, but was disrupted, heightening fears among families.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan wrote to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to take necessary steps, including arrangements to bring them back safely.

Passengers stranded by the closure of Dubai International Airport wait for assistance, in Dubai on Sunday—*ANI*

He assured that the Kerala government will extend all possible assistance, including setting up helplines to enable relatives to stay in contact with expatriates.

Meanwhile, 84 MBA students from Pune-based Indira School of Business Studies were stranded in Dubai after airspace closures triggered by the conflict in West Asia. They gone to Dubai as part of a study tour. They were safe and shifted to a hotel.

Over 700 people from Madhya Pradesh, including two former MLAs, are also stranded in the United Arab Emirates due to flight cancellations.

BJP leader Sanjay Shukla, who is in Dubai, also appealed to the Prime Minister to ensure the safe return of Indians stranded there and said his eldest son is also stuck with him there. —*PTI*

Iranian Embassy asks world to condemn US-Israel attack

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

The Iranian embassy in India on Sunday urged governments worldwide to strongly condemn the US-Israel attack that resulted in the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. In a statement, the mission expressed its "profound sorrow and grief" over his death.

The Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps has vowed revenge, claiming it has already launched retaliatory attacks on American bases in the Middle East. Iranian state media confirmed early Sunday that Khamenei was killed in an attack attributed to Israel and the US.

"The embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran calls upon independent and freedom-seeking governments to strongly condemn this blatant crime and to refrain from remaining silent in the face of lawlessness and aggression," the mission stated. US and Israel will face "grave consequences", it said. —*PTI*

UP village mourns Khamenei's death, recalls link to his mentor

BARABANKI, 1 MARCH

A sombre atmosphere enveloped Kintur village in Barabanki district as residents mourned the death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei amid US-Israel strikes.

Locals revealed that Kintur shares an ancestral link to Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, Khamenei's mentor, whose ancestors migrated from the village to Iran around 150 years ago.

Khomeini led Iran's 1979 Islamic Revolution and founded the Islamic republic. Villagers say the lineage and its historical ties continue to hold emotional significance. Syed Nihal Ahmad Kazmi, claiming descent from Khomeini's family, told PTI that Kintur is considered the birthplace of Syed Ahmad Musavi, Khomeini's grandfather, who participated in India's freedom struggle and journeyed to Iran in 1834.

Kazmi said Musavi settled in Khomein, where Khomeini was born. He added that Khamenei, a disciple of Khomeini, carried forward his legacy after 1989. Expressing grief, Kazmi called Khamenei's death "an attack on humanity". Residents gathered for prayers, reciting majlis for the departed. —*PTI*

Oppn condemns killing of Khamenei

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

Several opposition parties on Sunday condemned the killing of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israel strikes, with **Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra** saying that the assassination of Iran's supreme leader is "despicable".

Leaders of the Congress and other parties also criticised the Centre's foreign policy, saying the government's response to the war unleashed on Iran, which has been a long-time "friend", has been a "betrayal" of India's values, principles and interests.

AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi termed the killing as an "immoral and unlawful act" and expressed hope that the central government would play a role in halting the war.

CPI leader D Raja said that the US-Israel "nexus represents evil in its most naked form".

In Jammu and Kashmir, various parties, including the ruling National Conference, also deplored the US-Israel attacks on Iran.

history.

Gandhi said that she hopes that having "genuflected" before Israeli premier Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, the PM makes every effort to bring all Indian citizens in the affected countries back home to safety.

Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut said that Iran's becoming weak is also dangerous for India because if the US and Israel control it, their steps will move towards India. He also slammed the BJP led Cen tre for its stand follwing the US-ISraeli attack on Iran and raised questions on the Centre's foreign policy citing

RJD MP Manoj Jha said that US-Israel-Iran war is very shameful and is not going to end soon. He said that the United Nations has lost its meaning.

The Congress called upon the indian government to help end the hostilities. —*PTI*

- Leaders of different parties also criticised the Centre's foreign policy, saying the government's response to the war unleashed on Iran, is betrayal of its 'friend'.

Canadian PM supports US-Israeli strikes on Iran

MUMBAI, 1 MARCH

Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney has supported the United States' strikes on Iran, calling the necessary to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and threatening international peace and security.

He also said that Canada reaffirms "Israel's right to defend itself."

Speaking at the Canada-India Forum in Mumbai, he said the Islamic Republic of Iran is the principal source of instability and terror throughout the Middle East.

It has one of the world's worst human rights records, and must never be allowed to obtain or develop nuclear weapons, he added.

"Canada and our international partners have consistently called upon the Iranian regime to end its nuclear program, including at the G7 summit in Kananaskis and with the United Nations' re-imposition of sanctions this past September. We've sanctioned over 250 Iranian entities. We've listed the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist entity," Carney stated.

But despite numerous diplomatic efforts, Iran has neither fully dismantled its nuclear program, halted all enrichment activities, nor ended its support for regional terrorist proxy groups, he said.

"Canada stands with the Iranian people in their long and courageous struggle against this oppressive regime....," Carney added.

The Canadian government also seeks that civilians be protected in this conflict, he said. —*PTI*

CBSE POSTPONES CLASS 10, 12 BOARD EXAMS IN MIDDLE EAST

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) on Sunday postponed the class 10 and 12 board exams scheduled for 2 March in the Middle East region amid the Iran-Israel conflict.

The exams have been postponed in Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and UAE.

The new dates will be announced later, CBSE Examination Controller Sanyam Bhardwaj said.

The board will review the situation on 3 March and take appropriate decisions with regard to examination scheduled from 5 March 5 onwards. —*PTI*

DMK finalises seat-sharing pact with IUML, MMK

CHENNAI, 1 MARCH

The DMK has finalised seat-sharing agreements with two smaller parties - the IUML and MMK - allotting two seats each to them respectively.

The party is in negotiations with the Congress and Vaiko-led MDMK. The talks with other allies namely the VCK and DMDK is yet to commence.

Chief Minister M K Stalin, who is the president of the DMK, allotted two seats each to the Indian Union Muslim League and Manithaneya Makkal Katchi, another Muslim party, at the DMK state headquarters, Anna Arivalayam, following negotiations on February 28, a release from the party said on Saturday night.

While IUML will contest on the ladder symbol, the candidates of MMK will contest the upcoming Assembly election on DMK's Rising Sun symbol.

During the parleys with the Congress, the ruling DMK dispensation had offered a Rajya Sabha seat, Congress leaders said.

The DMK reportedly is yet to decide on the constituencies to be allotted for the IUML candidates for the coming assembly elections.

The MMK president M H Jawahirullah pointed out that the party retained the same number of seat it had contested and won in the previous 2021 Tamil Nadu assembly elections.

The seat sharing agreements make the IUML and MMK the first parties to formally sign deals with the DMK for the 2026 assembly elections. The developments came ahead of a major conference of allies scheduled for 9 March in Trichy. —*Agencies*

Lalu calls meeting over Tejashwi's RS poll contest

PATNA, 1 MARCH

Amid speculation that RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav may contest the Rajya Sabha polls in Bihar, party chief Lalu Prasad convened a parliamentary board meeting on Sunday. The meeting is set for four days before the Rajya Sabha nomination deadline. Of Bihar's 16 Rajya Sabha seats, five will fall vacant in April, with elections scheduled for 16 March. The RJD, the principal opposition party in the state, has only 25 MLAs, too few to secure a Rajya Sabha berth. The RJD-led grand alliance, which includes Congress, CPI(ML), CPI(M) and IIP, has only 35 members in the 243-strong state assembly, six less than the minimum number required to get a berth in the Upper House of Parliament. —*PTI*

SAYS TMC SHIELDED THEM

Over 50L infiltrators removed from WB voters list: BJP Chief

COOCH BEHAR/ GARBETA, 1 MARCH

BJP National President Nitin Nabin on Sunday claimed that more than 50 lakh infiltrators have been removed from the voter list and said "time is up for illegal immigrants" in the state.

Nabin said this a day after the publication of West Bengal's post-SIR electoral rolls that saw the deletion of 63.66 lakh names.

Addressing a rally in Cooch Behar while flagging off the party's 'Poriborton Yatra', Nabin alleged that those removed from the electoral rolls were "infiltrators", who had been availing government jobs and benefits of welfare schemes meant for genuine citizens.

BJP National President Nitin Nabin said that inflitrators have been availing government jobs and benefits of welfare schemes meant for citizens—*PTI*

The BJP chief alleged that West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee had provided "protection to infiltrators by helping them obtain fake documents".

"Mamata Banerjee rushed to the courts to protect infiltrators in the voter rolls, as they are her party's vote bank. But when women face humiliation, you choose to look the other way," Nabin said, in a sharp attack on the TMC leadership.

Meanwhile, in Garbeta Union Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Sunday, before flagging off the 'Poriborton Yatra' in Paschim Medinipur district, told reporters that TMC sought to change the demography of West Bengal by turning it into "West Bangladesh".

He said the yatra will lead to the dislodging of the Mamata Banerjee regime bringing in the 'double-engine' BJP government in West Bengal that will promote prosperity.—*PTI*

Cricketer Richa Ghosh's name 'under adjudication' in voter list

TMC on Sunday claimed that the name of Indian women cricketer Richa Ghosh has been placed in the "under adjudication" category in the voter list, accusing the Election Commission of "silent invisible rigging" exercise. Ghosh is a resident of Ward No 19 in Siliguri Municipal Corporation. She recently joined the West Bengal Police in the deputy superintendent of police rank and has taken charge as assistant commissioner of police in Siliguri Police Commissionerate. It said she "is forced to endure this humiliating scrutiny, her name flagged, her voter status questioned and her democratic right dangling by a thread." —*PTI*

Man gets lifer for torturing, raping child in Kerala

KOLLAM, 1 MARCH

A court in Kollam has sentenced Kalaivanan Kamaraj, a Nagapattinam native, to life imprisonment and a Rs 5 lakh fine for abusing a four-year-old girl. The Punalur Fast Track Court, under the POCSO Act, convicted him of aggravated penetrative sexual assault, causing burns with cigarettes, and physical abuse. The offences occurred between 12 May and 15 June 2023, while the child was living with her mother and the accused. The court noted the abuse, manipulation of the mother, and the victim's age. The trial involved 24 witnesses and 27 documents. The court described the abuse as "shocking."—*PTI*

—PTI

Assam police deport 21 Bangladeshis

GUWAHATI, 1 MARCH

Assam authorities deported 21 illegal migrants from Bangladesh, including children, early Sunday from Sribhumi district. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma praised police efforts, saying, "At 12.30am sharp, 21 illegal migrants were sent back to their respective country, thanks to the ever-watchful police." Photos shared on X showed at least seven children among those deported. The Assam government continues its crackdown on border infiltration, asserting strong action against illegal crossings from Bangladesh. This operation highlights the ongoing efforts to secure the border and prevent infiltration. —*PTI*

Denied leave for child's marriage, BLO ends life in UP

KANPUR, 1 MARCH

A 50-year-old Booth Level Officer (BLO), Akhilesh Savita, died by suicide inside a primary school in Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh, reportedly over being denied leave for his daughter's wedding. He was found hanging, with a note indicating stress from ongoing duties and unfulfilled wedding preparations. Savita had repeatedly requested leave but was refused. His family accused officials of ignoring his pleas. Survived by his wife and children, Savita had been seeking leave for weeks. Police have launched an inquiry. The incident sparked protests over workload and administrative neglect of BLOs — PTI

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, or SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support

—SCREENGRAB

YouTuber killed in Bhubaneswar, three arrested

BHUBANESWAR, 1 MARCH

A YouTuber has been allegedly stabbed to death in Bhubaneswar, police said on Sunday. The incident took place in GGP Colony under the jurisdiction of Mancheswar police station around 10 pm on Saturday. The deceased was identified as Rahul Maharana, a resident of Palasuni locality in the city. Maharana was attacked with a sharp weapon after an altercation with three people, an officer said. He was left in a pool of blood and locals rescued took him to a nearby private hospital. He was then shifted to Capital Hospital, where doctors declared him dead, the officer said. Police scrutinised CCTV footage of the area and arrested the three persons, and seized a knife, he said, adding investigation is underway to ascertain the reason behind the murder. —*PTI*

17 dead, 18 hurt in Nagpur explosives factory blast

Bodies completely charred, DNA samples of kin taken

An excavator clears debris after a blast in a factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district on Sunday *PHOTO: PTI*

NAGPUR, 1 MARCH

At least 17 persons were killed and 18 others were injured in a powerful blast that tore through an explosives manufacturing factory in Maharashtra's Nagpur district on Sunday, police said.

The incident comes a day after a blast at a cracker unit in Andhra Pradesh's Kakinada district claimed 21 lives.

The blast took place at the SBL Energy Limited factory, a mining and industrial explosives manufacturer, at Raulgaon in the Katol tehsil of Nagpur district, a senior police official said.

At least 17 persons were killed and 18 others suffered injuries, the police said.

The bodies were charred beyond recognition and DNA samples of family members were being taken for testing to ascertain the identities of the deceased.

Wailing, inconsolable family members of the victims thronged the factory compound, located about 50 km from the district headquarters, for some news about their loved ones.

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis ordered a thorough investigation into the cause of the explosion.

Teams of the NDRF and the SDRF, along with officials from Petroleum and Explosives Safety Organisation (PESO) and Defence Information System for Security (DISS), are at the site and rescue operations are being carried out, Fadnavis said.

The injured were shifted to a hospital in Nagpur immediately after the blast, the police said.

Representatives of SBL Energy Limited said that the incident occurred at the company's detonator packing unit between 7 am and 7.15 am.

"The incident occurred in the packing area of the facility, where no active manufacturing operations were underway at the time. The exact cause is being investigated," the company said. The company is also bearing the full cost of medical treatment for the injured, it said. — *PTI*

Andhra cracker unit blast toll rises to 21

VETLAPALEM, 1 MARCH

The death toll in the cracker unit blast here in Kakinada district rose by one to reach 21, said an official on Sunday.

Around 20 people, including nine women, were killed and nine more were critically injured in the blast at a licensed cracker unit in Vetlapalem village in Samarlakota mandal on Saturday.

Police said the owner of Surya Sri Fire Works, Adabala Srinivas, was also among the dead.

Kakinada District Medical and Health Officer (DM&HO) J Narasimha Nayak said that all 20 bodies were identified and handed over to their families after autopsy. Meanwhile, Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, who called on the injured workers at the Kakinada Government General Hospital, said that the disaster was due to the owner of the unit flouting rules. — *PTI*

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Prime Minister Modi, Union Minister Mansukh L Mandaviya, Puducherry Lt. Governor K Kailashnathan, Puducherry CM N Rangaswamy and others during the inauguration of development projects in Puducherry —*PTI*

Congress made Puducherry 'ATM' for 'a family': Modi

PUDUCHERRY, 1 MARCH

Attacking the Congress, Prime Minister Modi said that Congress rule in this Union Territory was marked by political instability, and corruption, and that the UT has become an "ATM for a family" in Delhi.

Hitting out at the DMK, Modi said the public was able to see a long list of "scams" that were occurring in Tamil Nadu, ruled by it.

During the earlier Congress rule in Puducherry, ration shops had no rice, salaries were delayed, goons and drug mafias ruled the streets, he alleged at an event held here to mark the launch of new projects.

The Congress and the DMK have become a "speed breaker" in Puducherry's development journey, he said."Now the same forces are hungry for power again," he said in his address after unveiling projects worth over Rs 2,700 crore. Assembly elections are due in a month in this UT.

By 2047, Puducherry must become a 'developed' UT and the double engine government "is with you in this mission," Modi said. The UT is ruled by the AINRC-BJP coalition government.

"I strongly believe Puducherry can become a medical tourism hub. It already has nine medical colleges," he said.

Puducherry witnessed good governance, development, as Centre and the UT worked with same vision, he said.

The Centre has included Puducherry under the special assistance for capital investment scheme that is meant only for states, Modi said, adding this move benefits the people of the UT by way of better infrastructure including roads. — *PTI*

Bar and Bench cannot be separated, says CJI Kant

TIRUPATI, 1 MARCH

Bar is an integral part of the justice delivery system and cannot be separated, although people think that it is the sole responsibility of the court to deliver justice, Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said on Sunday.

After laying the foundation stone for the District Courts Complex here, CJI Kant said the bar and the bench are not adversaries, but two hands of the same institution. A strong bar produces strong advocacy, and when there is strong advocacy, that challenges the judges to think harder, reason more carefully, and write more clearly.

He said that the quality of assistance which the bar provides is reflected in the overall work of the judge. The better the bar argues, the better the quality of the judgment and when there is a better judgment, public confidence is built in the rule of law.

Justice Kant said he strongly advocates that the court complexes need to act like hospitals. When a patient goes, the first thing is to provide him with the first medical aid so that he feels that he is in safe hands.

"The same thing should happen when a consumer of justice who comes to you. Once he enters this complex, he should have a feeling that he will leave only after securing justice," he said. — *PTI*

UP girl falls through school bus floor, dies

KASGANJ, 1 MARCH

A school ride turned into a horrifying tragedy on Saturday when eight-year-old Ananya, fell through the broken floor of a moving school bus and was crushed under its rear wheels in the Kasganj district of UP.

The accident triggered a massive uproar and a road blockade as enraged villagers held the school and the driver responsible.

The bus was in poor condition, with a hole the size of a large crater on its floor, near the seat where Ananya sat, directly above the rear wheel. Despite its unsafe condition, the bus transported nearly 40 children every day.

Ananya and her brother, 10-year-old Yajat, were returning home from Mount International School in Bhudia. Around 3 pm, near Birhara village, the bus's floor beneath Ananya collapsed. She slipped through the opening and landed beneath the moving bus.

The bus had a large crater size hole on its floor directly above the rear wheel near the seat on which Ananya was sitting *PHOTO: PTI*

Yajat raised an alarm. By the time the driver stopped the bus, the wheels had already rolled over Ananya's head and chest.

The driver found her injured by the wheel but still breathing. He put her back down in the bus and rushed to the Malasai intersection, where her father, Ravi Kumar, runs a public service centre. However, Ananya died before reaching him.

- Ananya and her brother, 10-year-old Yajat, were returning home from Mount International School in Bhudia. Around 3 pm, near Birhara village, the bus's floor beneath Ananya collapsed and she fell on the road

As soon as the villagers saw this, they grabbed the driver, beat him up, and broke the bus.

A huge crowd blocked the Aligarh–Kasganj road for almost an hour, causing a traffic jam.

Police officers from the Gangiri police station and CO Chharra Sanjeev Tomar came to calm the crowd. Authorities have announced a district-wide checking drive of school buses after this incident. —*Agencies*

Rlys launches RailOne App, scraps UTS

PRAYAGRAJ, 1 MARCH

- The RailOne App offers facilities for booking general (unreserved) tickets, platform ticket purchases, reserved seat bookings, live train status tracking, PNR status checks, train search services and all other information connected to the Indian Railways

Regular train travellers will need to adjust to a major digital shift starting on 1 March. Indian Railways has formally discontinued its long-running UTS (Unreserved Ticketing System) mobile application, and has directed passengers to a new integrated platform called RailOne.

For years, the UTS app had been the go-to option for booking unreserved and platform tickets, helping millions avoid long queues at railway stations.

With its closure, all such bookings will now be processed through the RailOne app.

The Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) of North Central Railways (NCR), Shashikant Tripathi, said that the RailOne app functions as a master app of the railways, and the passengers will no longer have to use separate apps for unreserved and reserved ticket booking.

RailOne app offers facilities for booking general (unreserved) tickets, platform ticket purchases, reserved seat bookings, live train status tracking, PNR status checks, and train search services.

The app also introduces a QR code-based ticketing system, aimed at simplifying verification.

Passengers can make payments via UPI, debit cards, credit cards, and net banking.

Railway officials have clarified that any remaining balance in the UTS R-Wallet will automatically transfer to RailOne when users log in with the same registered mobile number.

While authorities expect a smoother and faster ticketing experience in the long run, some minor technical adjustments may be needed during the early days of its implementation. — *ANI*

Muslim students harassed in Kurnool college: JKSA

KURNOOL, 1 MARCH

The Jammu and Kashmir Students Association (JKSA) has sought Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu's intervention over alleged harassment, denial of Ramadan meals and restrictions on hijab for Kashmiri students at the Government College of Nursing in Kurnool.

"We believe the management is attempting to hush up the issue," JKSA convenor Nasir Khuehami said here.

Marking its complaint to Deputy CM Pawan Kalyan, the JKSA said that Muslim students were being denied adequate Sehri (pre-dawn meal) and Iftar (fast-breaking meal at sunset). But college principal R Padmavathi said that students of all religions are allowed to observe their respective practices. — *PTI*

M'RASHTRA TRIBAL WOMEN TAKE CHARGE OF SCHOOLS' MAINTENANCE

MUMBAI, 1 MARCH

Tribal women in Maharashtra are being trained to maintain residential schools, including hygiene and safe drinking water systems, under a state government initiative to boost rural entrepreneurship and sustainable livelihoods, officials said.

As part of the 'Adisakhi: WASHMITRA' initiative, the state Tribal Development Department, in collaboration with the UNICEF and the Centre for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA), trained 120 tribal women between September 2024 and November 2025.

They are actively delivering services, earning a steady income, and strengthening essential WASH (water, sanitation and hygiene) infrastructure in their areas while becoming financially independent, despite facing challenges like irregular work demand and travel and distance barriers, the officials said.

These women now act as frontline operation and maintenance (O&M) support for 'ashramshalas' (residential schools) and local communities, they said.

"Through this initiative with UNICEF and CYDA, we are maintaining school infrastructure, including hygiene and safe drinking water facilities. Adisakhis have become skilled leaders in their own communities," Maharashtra Tribal Development Department Secretary Vijay Waghmare said.

"By training local women to manage repair and maintenance work in ashramshaals, we have demonstrated that technical roles traditionally seen as male-dominated can be successfully handled by women when given the right support," he said. — *PTI*

RELIEF AFTER 2 YEARS

Wayanad landslide survivors get new homes

WAYANAD, 1 MARCH

Survivors of the Mundakkai–Chooralmala landslide got a fresh lease of life on Sunday as the Kerala government handed over new homes to 178 families among them.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurated the first phase of the Wayanad Model Township constructed at Elton Estate here.

Vijayan dedicated the township, with all basic amenities, to the beneficiaries, describing it as a "testament to Kerala's resolve to build back better."

Five acres of land were acquired near Meppadi village to rehabilitate 13 Scheduled Tribe families who were left isolated after the disaster, and the land pattas for them were also handed over on the occasion.

Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan gives a title deed to a family during the allotment of houses to 178 families in Kerala's Kalpetta *PHOTO: PTI*

The township envisages rehabilitation of 410 families. 402 families comprising 1,662 people will reside there upon completion.

Spread across five zones with 35 clusters, each cluster comprises eight to 20 houses built around a central green courtyard, with a 5.5-metre-wide internal road. Each family is allotted seven cents of land with individual pattas.

The township includes facilities such as a disaster shelter, football ground, disaster memorial, shops, material collection facility, check dam and water body, power distribution network, drainage system, and a 9.5-lakh-litre overhead water tank.

The government provided Rs 6,000 per month as house rent assistance to the landslide affected families.

Livelihood assistance totalling Rs 17.2 crore was disbursed, along with Rs 13 crore as relief assistance and Rs 1.3 crore as emergency aid for the survivors. Assistance of Rs two crore was extended to 21 children who lost their parents. Vijayan noted that Rs 773.98 crore was contributed to the Chief Minister's Distress Relief Fund for Wayanad disaster victims.

Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh contributed Rs 10 crore each, while Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan provided Rs 5 crore each, the Chief Minister explained. — *PTI*

AYATOLLAH KHAMENEI: THE CLERIC WHO FORGED IRAN'S DEFIANCE

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the austere cleric who consolidated unrivalled theocratic authority over Iran for more than three decades and steered the Islamic Republic into confrontation with Israel and the United States, has died aged 86.

Iranian state media reported his death early on Sunday, hours after US President Donald Trump said Khamenei had been killed in a joint Israeli–American strike. The attack followed a major escalation in hostilities centred on Iran's nuclear programme. Tehran declared 40 days of public mourning and a seven-day nationwide holiday. The semiofficial Fars news agency reported that Khamenei's daughter, son-in-law, a grandchild and a daughter-in-law were also killed.

Khamenei's death brings to a close an era that began in 1989 when he succeeded Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the revolutionary ideologue who overthrew the shah and established clerical rule. Where Khomeini was charismatic and fiery, Khamenei was methodical and unyielding. Over 36 years he transformed revolutionary fervour into an entrenched state apparatus, greatly expanding the reach of the Shiite clerical establishment and building the Revolutionary Guard into the dominant military, political and economic force in the country.

His passing raises urgent questions about the stability and future direction of the Islamic Republic at a time of deep domestic discontent and regional upheaval.

THE RISE

Born in 1939 in Mashhad into a religious family, Khamenei came of age amid growing opposition to Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. As a teenager he studied in seminaries in Najaf and Qom, absorbing the teachings of Khomeini and other clerics who fused Shia Islam with anti-colonialism and a belief in revolutionary governance.

Central to that worldview was the doctrine of velayat-e faqih — guardianship of the jurist — which holds that a senior Islamic scholar should wield ultimate political authority. In practice, it placed sovereignty not in popular will but in divine legitimacy interpreted by a single cleric. Khamenei joined Khomeini's movement against the shah in the 1960s, enduring imprisonment and periods in hiding. Arrested in 1971 by the shah's secret police, he later recounted being tortured. When Khomeini returned from exile in 1979 and proclaimed the Islamic Republic, Khamenei was appointed to the Revolutionary Council and later became deputy defence minister, helping to organise the newly formed Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

In 1981, after surviving an assassination attempt that left his right hand paralysed, Khamenei was elected Iran's third president. He served two terms during the brutal Iran–Iraq war, aligning closely with Khomeini and cultivating a lasting alliance with the Guard.

Few expected him to become supreme leader. Khomeini had initially favoured Grand Ayatollah Hossein-Ali Montazeri as his successor, but Montazeri fell from grace after criticising human rights abuses and resigned in 1988. Following Khomeini's death in June 1989, the Assembly of Experts chose Khamenei, despite doubts about his clerical rank. A constitutional referendum soon removed the requirement that the supreme leader be a grand ayatollah, consolidating his position.

In his first speech as leader, Khamenei acknowledged scepticism. "I am an individual with many faults and shortcomings and truly a minor seminarian," he said. Yet the constitutional amendments granted him sweeping powers, more extensive than those Khomeini had wielded, including authority over general policy, the armed forces, the judiciary and state broadcasting, as well as the power to appoint and dismiss key officials.

CONSOLIDATING A HARD-LINE STATE

Khamenei's authority rested on an expanding web of clerical bodies and state institutions that blurred lines of responsibility while leaving him as ultimate arbiter. He ensured the survival and growth of the Revolutionary Guard after the war with Iraq, transforming it into a military powerhouse controlling Iran's ballistic missile arsenal and vast swathes of the economy.

The Guard's elite Quds Force projected Iranian influence across the region, while the Basij militia enforced ideological conformity at home. Hardliners revered Khamenei as second only to God in authority.

He worked with successive presidents to varying degrees. He largely backed the economic pragmatism of Hashemi Rafsanjani in the 1990s but obstructed reformists such as Mohammad Khatami and Hassan Rouhani when their agendas threatened clerical supremacy or sought rapprochement with the West.

His most consequential domestic intervention came in 2009. After President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's disputed re-election, mass protests erupted in what became known as the Green Movement. Khamenei endorsed the result and authorised a harsh crackdown by the Guard and security forces. Dozens were killed and thousands arrested, dealing a lasting blow to his standing among many Iranians.

Economic hardship compounded political repression. Protests over unemployment and rising prices flared in 2017 and again in 2019 after fuel subsidies were cut. Activists said more than 300 people were killed in the 2019 crackdown.

The death in 2022 of Mahsa Amini, detained for allegedly wearing her headscarf improperly, triggered the most sustained unrest in decades. Demonstrations expanded beyond demands over dress codes to direct challenges to clerical rule. Security forces killed more than 500 people and arrested tens of thousands. By late 2025, amid a collapsing currency and renewed sanctions, hundreds of thousands again took to the streets, some chanting "Death to Khamenei" and even calling for the return of the shah's exiled son. The repression that followed was described as the bloodiest in nearly half a century of clerical rule.

THE 'AXIS OF RESISTANCE'

In foreign policy, Khamenei entrenched Iran's posture of resistance to what he termed Western imperialism. Under his leadership, Tehran shifted from conventional warfare to cultivating proxy forces across the Middle East — an alignment dubbed the "Axis of Resistance". Iran supported Hezbollah in Lebanon, which forced Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000 and fought it to a standstill in 2006. Tehran backed militias in Iraq after the 2003 US invasion toppled Saddam Hussein, embedding influence in Baghdad's political and security structures. It aided President Bashar al-Assad during Syria's civil war and supported Yemen's Houthi after they seized Sana'a in 2014. The strategy allowed Iran to project power indirectly. Iranian-backed groups were accused of attacks including the 1994 bombing of a Jewish centre in Buenos Aires and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia. Tehran denied responsibility.

The regional order began to unravel after Hamas's 7 October 2023 attack on Israel triggered a devastating war in Gaza. Israel struck Iranian interests across the region and is widely believed to have killed senior militant leaders. In 2024 Israel and Iran attacked each other directly for the first time. By late 2024 and 2025, Israel had decimated Hamas, severely weakened Hezbollah and seen the fall of Assad in Syria, fracturing the axis Khamenei had spent decades constructing.

Nuclear brinkmanship

Khamenei remained deeply suspicious of Washington, routinely referring to the United States as the "Great Satan". While issuing a religious ruling that nuclear weapons were un-Islamic, he pressed ahead with uranium enrichment, insisting on Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy.

Under the 2015 nuclear accord with world powers, Iran curtailed enrichment in exchange for sanctions relief. But in 2018 President Trump withdrew the US from the deal, reimposing sweeping sanctions. Tehran gradually breached the agreement's limits, enriching uranium to 60 per cent purity — close to weapons-grade.

The killing of Qassem Soleimani, head of the Quds Force, in a US drone strike in January 2020 brought the two countries to the brink of war. Days later Iran mistakenly shot down a Ukrainian passenger jet, killing 176 people, further eroding public trust.

Diplomatic efforts under President Joe Biden failed to revive the nuclear deal. When Trump returned to office in 2025, talks briefly resumed amid severe economic strain in Iran. But a breakthrough proved elusive. In June 2025 Israel and the US bombed Iranian nuclear facilities, inflicting heavy damage. Iran retaliated with missiles and drones. On Saturday, amid renewed strikes, Trump urged Iranians to "take over your government". Hours later Khamenei was reported dead.

A TARNISHED LEGACY

Khamenei ruled longer than Khomeini and exercised broader constitutional powers. Yet while Khomeini's funeral in 1989 drew millions, Khamenei's legacy appears more divisive. Decades of sanctions, corruption, repression and regional conflict left many Iranians disillusioned.

"Culturally, the government is bankrupt," Mehdi Khalaji, an analyst at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, said in 2017. "The ideology of the Islamic Republic did not work at all." Despite efforts to insulate the country from Western influence, satellite dishes dotted Tehran's rooftops and banned social media thrived. —*PTI*

THE RISE AND FALL OF KHAMENEI

1939 Born on 19 April in Mashhad

1958 Moves to Qom to study and becomes a close ally of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini

1960s–1970s Active in anti-monarchy movement; arrested and tortured repeatedly

1979 After the Islamic Revolution, joins the Revolutionary Council and helps organise the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

POWER CONSOLIDATION

1981–1989 Serves as president of Iran

1989 Becomes Supreme Leader after Khomeini's death

1999 Suppresses student protests

2015 Supports Iran's participation in a nuclear deal

2022 Cracks down on women protesting hijab laws after Mahsa Amini's death

DEC 2025 Massive protests over economic collapse; more than 7,000 reportedly killed

2026 Reportedly killed in a joint Israeli–US strike, aged 86

HOW WILL KHAMENEI'S SUCCESSOR BE CHOSEN?

The death of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei raises paramount questions about the country's future. And while a clerical panel is tasked with replacing him, succession is a complex matter in Iran's theocracy. Here is what to know:

- The supreme leader is at the heart of Iran's complex power-sharing Shiite theocracy and has final say over all matters of state.

A CLERICAL COUNCIL SELECTS A NEW SUPREME LEADER

An 88-member panel called the Assembly of Experts appoints the supreme leader. The panel can remove one as well, although that has never happened.

The panel consists entirely of Shiite clerics who are popularly elected every eight years and whose candidacies are approved by the Guardian Council, Iran's constitutional watchdog. That body is known for disqualifying candidates in various elections in Iran and the Assembly of Experts is no different. The Guardian Council barred former Iranian President Hassan Rouhani, a relative moderate whose administration struck the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, from election for the Assembly of Experts in March 2024.

A temporary leadership council may assume duties in case of delay

Iranian law says the Assembly of Experts "must, as soon as possible" pick a new supreme leader. But until then, a leadership council can step in and "temporarily assume all the duties of leadership."

The assembly is made up of Iran's sitting president, the head of the country's judiciary and a member of the Guardian Council chosen by Iran's Expediency Council, which advises the supreme leader and settles disputes with parliament. If that were to happen now, Iran's reformist President Masoud Pezeshkian and hard-line judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei would be on that leadership council.

KHAMENEI'S SON COULD BE A POSSIBLE CONTENDER

Clerical deliberations about succession and machinations over it take place far from the public eye, making it hard to gauge who may be a top contender.

Previously, it was thought Khamenei's protégé, hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi, may try to take the mantle. However, he was killed in a May 2024 helicopter crash. That has left one of Khamenei's sons, Mojtaba, a 56-year-old Shiite cleric, as a potential candidate, though he has never held government office. But a father-to-son transfer in the case of a supreme leader could spark anger, not only among Iranians already critical of clerical rule, but also among supporters of the system. Some may see it as un-Islamic and in line with creating a new, religious dynasty after the 1979 collapse of the U.S.-backed Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's government.

A transition like this has happened only once before

There has been only one other transfer of power in the office of supreme leader of Iran, the paramount decision-maker since the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution.

In 1989, Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini died at age 86 after being the figurehead of the revolution and leading Iran through its bloody eight-year war with Iraq. This transition now comes after Israel launched a 12-day war against Iran in June 2025 as well.

THE VAST POWERS OF A SUPREME LEADER

The supreme leader is at the heart of Iran's complex power-sharing Shiite theocracy and has final say over all matters of state.

He also serves as the commander-in-chief of the country's military and the powerful Revolutionary Guard, a paramilitary force that the United States designated a terrorist organisation in 2019 and which Khamenei empowered during his rule. The Guard, which has led the self-described "Axis of Resistance," a series of militant groups and allies across the Middle East meant to counter the US and Israel, also has extensive wealth and holdings in Iran. —*PTI*

Demonstrators march near the White House in Washington, carrying a photo of exiled monarch Reza Pahlavi after the killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's -*PTI*

Leaders on edge as fear of World War 3 grips the globe

Fears of a broader regional conflict, and even a possible world war, escalated on Saturday after joint strikes by the United States and Israel on Iran, alongside reports of the death of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The apparent demise of the Islamic Republic's second supreme leader, with no publicly designated successor, risks plunging the country into political uncertainty and raising concerns of wider instability. An emergency session of the United Nations Security Council was convened as governments around the world reacted cautiously.

While many nations avoided direct criticism of Washington or Tel Aviv, several condemned Tehran's retaliatory strikes on neighbouring Arab states. Others openly expressed support or opposition, highlighting deep geopolitical divides.

CALLS FOR DIPLOMACY

In a joint statement, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz urged both Washington and Tehran to return to negotiations, stressing that diplomacy remained the preferred solution. The leaders confirmed their countries had not participated in the strikes but were in close contact with the US, Israel and regional partners. London, Paris and Berlin have led recent efforts to broker a negotiated settlement over Iran's nuclear programme.

"We condemn Iranian attacks on countries in the region in the strongest terms. Iran must refrain from indiscriminate military strikes," they said. "Ultimately, the Iranian people must be allowed to determine their future."

Speaking at an emergency security meeting, President Macron emphasised that France had been "neither warned nor involved" in the strikes. "No one can think that Iran's nuclear programme, ballistic activity, or regional destabilisation will be resolved by strikes alone," he added.

Supporters gather to mourn Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's death in Tehran, Iran, on Sunday —*PTI*

The Arab League, representing 22 nations, called Iran's attacks "a blatant violation of the sovereignty of countries that advocate peace and stability." Morocco, Jordan, Syria and the United Arab Emirates condemned Iranian strikes targeting US military bases, including sites in Kuwait, Bahrain and Qatar. Syria's condemnation was particularly notable, reflecting efforts by the new government to rebuild ties with regional powers and Washington, despite the country's historic alliance with Tehran. Saudi Arabia labelled the Iranian strikes "treacherous aggression and a blatant violation of sovereignty." Oman, which has mediated talks between Tehran and Washington, criticised the US action as a breach of international law, urging peaceful resolution of disputes.

CAREFULLY CALIBRATED RESPONSES

Elsewhere, governments were cautious in their reactions. New Zealand acknowledged the US and Israeli strikes as limiting what it called an ongoing threat from Tehran, without fully endorsing the actions. Prime Minister Christopher Luxon and Foreign Minister Winston Peters stated: "The legitimacy of a government rests on the support of its people.

The Iranian regime has long since lost that support."

China expressed "high concern," calling for an immediate halt to military action and insisting Iran's sovereignty be respected.

Canada, despite tensions with Washington, openly supported the strikes, with Prime Minister Mark Carney describing Iran as "the principal source of instability and terror throughout the Middle East."

ANXIETY ACROSS THE REGION

On the ground, apprehension was visible. In the occupied West Bank, Palestinians in Ramallah carried on daily life even as distant booms from Israeli missile defences echoed overhead. Residents of Jerusalem, by contrast, sought shelter as sirens sounded. Checkpoint closures caused long queues at petrol stations, reflecting fears of possible supply disruptions. The Palestinian Authority condemned Iran's attacks on Arab states, many of which provide it financial support, but did not mention the US or Israeli strikes. Norwegian Foreign Minister Espen Barth Eide warned the collapse of negotiations risked triggering "a new, extensive war in the Middle East." The Nobel Peace Prize-winning International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons criticised the strikes as "totally irresponsible," highlighting the heightened risk of nuclear proliferation. —*PTI*

NEW AYATOLLAH IN ONE-TWO DAYS: IRAN

Iran calls it a war on Muslims; Oman attacked for 1st time

Smoke rises after a strike in Tehran, Iran on Sunday —PTI

DUBAI, 1 MARCH

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said a new Supreme Leader would be chosen in "one or two days", as explosions resounded across the Middle East on Sunday.

Iran confirmed that Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed on Sunday.

Iran's Supreme Leader is selected by the Assembly of Experts, an 88-member clerical body elected by the public every eight years. Candidates who run for the Assembly must first be vetted and approved by the Guardian Council, an oversight body whose members are partly appointed by the Supreme Leader.

President Masoud Pezeshkian that both Israel and the US had declared a "war on Muslims".

He said that a new leadership council "has begun its work" as top officials vowed revenge.

Tensions mounted as Iran sent missiles and drones across the Middle East. Saudi Arabia condemned Iran's attacks on its capital, Riyadh, and eastern region, saying it had successfully intercepted them.

Attacks also extended into Oman — Iran's longtime interlocutor with the West that hadn't been drawn into the fray previously.

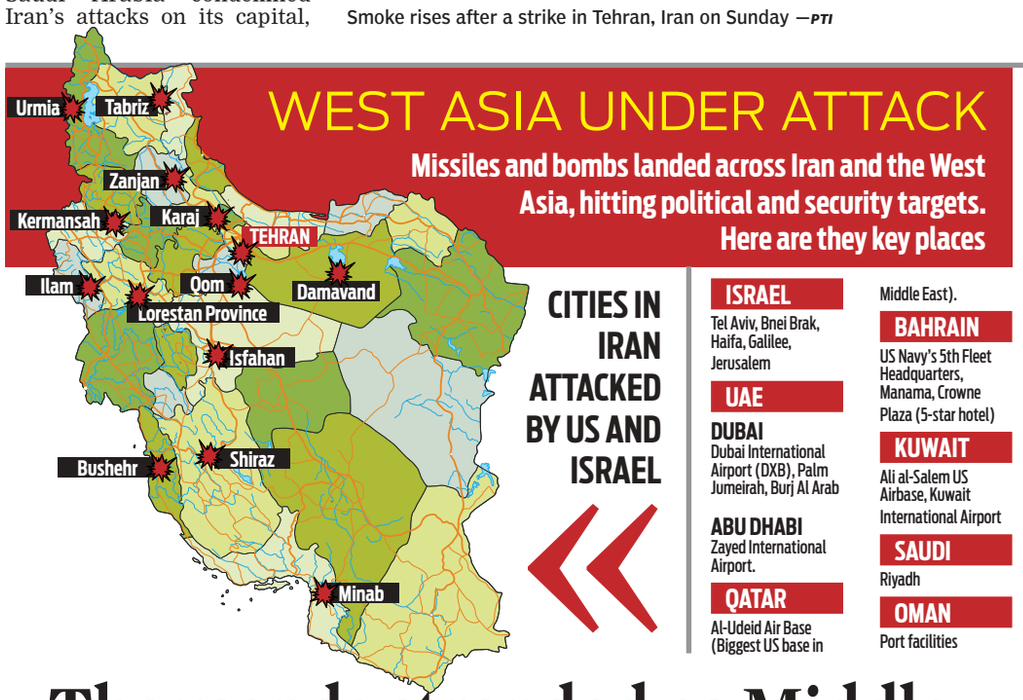
ROUGH TIDES

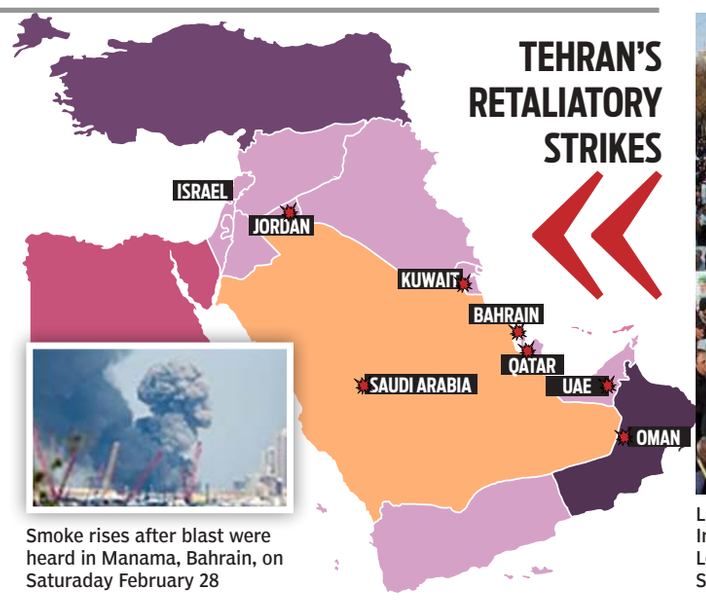
The battle quickly escalated to the sea. Iran closed off the Strait of Hormuz, a crucial oil shipping corridor responsible for at least 20 per cent of the world's traded oil passes through the vital waterway, meaning that oil prices could skyrocket. Tehran also attacked an oil tanker near Oman, injuring at least four people. The tanker, Skylight, was sailing with a 20-person crew, including 15 Indians and five Iranians.

CENTCOM said that it had sent an Iranian ship "to the bottom of the Gulf of Oman at the Chahbahar port".

President Donald Trump had long vowed to keep the US out of a "forever war".

But as casualties mounted, it appears unlikely that the conflict would end soon. —*Agencies*



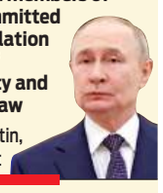


Smoke rises after blast were heard in Manama, Bahrain, on Saturaday February 28

Large crowd of people in Tabriz, Iran, hit streets to mourn Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, on Sunday —PRESS TV

Please accept my deepest condolences in connection with the assassination of the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and members of his family, committed in a cynical violation of all norms of human morality and international law

-Vladimir Putin, Russia President



The heavy and pinpoint bombing will continue, uninterrupted throughout the week or, as long as necessary to achieve our objective of peace through the middle east and the world

-Donald Trump, US President

In the coming days, we will strike thousands of targets of the terrorist regime. We will create the conditions for the brave people of Iran to free themselves from the chains of tyranny

-Benjamin Netanyahi, Israel Prime

Any attempt by the regime to appoint a successor to Khamenei is doomed to fail. Whoever they place in his stead will lack legitimacy and be complicit in the crimes of this regime

-Reza Pahlavi, exiled crown prince

It is unacceptable for the US and Israel to launch strikes on Iran during the negotiations and blatantly kill the leader of a sovereign state and incite government change

-Wang Yi, Chinese Foreign Minister

Thousands stranded as Middle East airports close due to strikes

LONDON, 1 MAR

Airports and airspaces in the Middle East remained closed on Sunday, affecting thousands of passengers as key airports were hit by strikes.

Hundreds of thousands of travellers were either stranded or diverted to other airports on Saturday after Israel, Qatar, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain closed their airspace. There also was no flight activity over the UAE, flight tracking website FlightRadar24 said, after the government there announced a "temporary and partial closure" of its airspace.

The closure of key hub airports in Dubai, Abu Dhabi and Doha led to the cancellation of over 1,800 flights by major Middle Eastern airlines.

The three major airlines that operate at those airports — Emirates, Qatar Airways and Etihad — typically have about 90,000 passengers per day crossing through those hubs and even more travellers headed to destinations in the Middle East.

Israel, Qatar, Syria, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait and Bahrain closed their airspaces stranding thousands passengers—PTI

At least 145 planes that were en route to cities like Tel Aviv and Dubai early Saturday were diverted to airports in cities like Athens, Istanbul or Rome. Others turned around and returned to where they took off from. One plane spent nearly 15 hours in the air after leaving Philadelphia and getting all the way to Spain before turning around and returning to where it started.

While people are hopeful that some airspaces would open soon, it is unclear how long the disruption to flight operations could last. For comparison, the Israeli and US attack on Iran in June 2025 lasted 12 days. Airlines urged passengers to check their flight status online before heading to the airport.

Some airlines issued waivers to travellers allowing them to rebook their flight plans without paying extra fees. —*PTI*

Iran's chief of army staff, defence minister killed

TEHRAN, 1 MAR

Iran's chief of army staff Gen Abdol Rahim Mousavi and defence minister Gen Aziz Nasirzadeh were killed in an airstrike targeting a meeting of the country's defence council, Iranian state television reported on Sunday. Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard and security adviser Ali Shamkhani was also killed.

Gen Ahmad Vahidi has been appointed commander of the Revolutionary Guards Corps following the assassination of Mohammad Fakhpo.

Vahidi, an ex Quds Force commander is wanted by Interpol since 2007 for the 1994 Argentine Israelite Mutual Association bombing in Buenos Aires that killed 85 people, was appointed deputy chief of Iran's armed forces general staff in October 2025. Vahidi has previously served as Iran's Minister of Defense and Interior. —*Agencies*

10 killed as mourners storm US Consulate in Karachi

KARACHI, 1 MAR

At least 10 people were killed, and several were injured on Sunday after clashes broke out between police and protesters as they tried to storm the gates of the US Consulate in Pakistan's Karachi. The demonstrators blamed the US for the assassination of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Several of 10 bodies brought to Civil Hospital had bullet wounds, said Sindh Police Surgeon Dr Sumaiya Syed, adding that at least 30 others were injured.

"The injured include four policemen," Dr Sumaiya Syed stated..

The police deployed tear gas and rubber bullets after the crowd started vandalising the embassy and attacking police, said Senior police official, SSP Asad Reza.

The police also baton-charged the crowd.

Police officers chase Shiite Muslims blocking a road during a protest over the killing of Iran Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, in Pakistan —PTI

However, one of demonstrators claimed to a TV channel that the police also fired upon them.

Meanwhile, protests have also been reported in Islamabad and Lahore on Sunday following the assassination of Khamenei.

In Islamabad, Tehreek-e-Jafaria Pakistan announced a protest and a planned encirclement of the US Embassy. Authorities have responded by sealing the Red Zone and deploying additional personnel on all roads leading to it, the report added.

Prohibitory orders have been imposed in several major cities as the Shiite community announced protests against the US. —*PTI*

Iran blocks Pak ships from Hormuz Strait

Three vessels operated by the Pakistan National Shipping Corporation were stopped on Sunday by Iran from proceeding towards the Strait of Hormuz. The three ships - Karachi, Lahore and Khairpur – had set sail to transport oil and carried Pakistani crew members. Iran has closed the Strait of Hormuz to all maritime traffic.

Internet blackout continues in Iran

The internet blackout in Iran crossed the 24-hour mark, , according to Net Blocks, which monitors internet connectivity. Iranian officials imposed the blackout after Israel and Iran began their strikes and launched massive cyber-attacks. Iran had previously imposed a blackout during the protests in December and January.

US & Israel clash with Iran in United Nations Security Council

UNITED NATIONS, 1 MAR

The US and Israel clashed with Iran in the UN Security Council as Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that military action risks uncontrollable "chain of events".

"Military action carries the risk of igniting a chain of events that no one can control," Guterres told the emergency meeting of the UNSC on Saturday, that met hours after US and Israel began their bombardment.

Guterres also condemned Iran's retaliation.

US Representative to the UN Mike Waltz justified the strikes, saying: "The international community has long affirmed a simple and necessary principle: Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon... And to that end, the US is taking lawful actions".

Israel's UN Ambassador Danny Danon said his country acted to stop "an existential threat".

However, Iran's ambassador to the UN Amir Saeid Iravani said the US and Israel "initiated a crime against humanity", saying that a strike on a school killed at least 100 children. Urging the UN to hold Israel and the US accountable, he said: "Silence is complicity in this crime".

Iravani and Waltz also engaged in a clash of words, with the Iranian envoy telling Waltz to be "polite". Waltz replied that Iravani represents "a regime that has killed tens of thousands of its own people and imprisoned many more simply for wanting freedom from your tyranny." —*PTI*

AMID IRAN TENSIONS

Israel closes crossings into Gaza, West Bank

JERUSALEM, 1 MAR

Israel announced on Saturday evening the closure of crossings in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including the Rafah crossing, amid tensions with Iran.

Nearly all of Gaza's population of around 2 million people is dependant on humanitarian aid.

However, Israel's COGAT claimed in its statement on the closures of the Gaza crossings that enough food had been delivered to Gaza since the beginning of the ceasefire to provide four times the need of the population, without providing evidence. It said "the existing stock is expected to suffice for an extended period".

The closures included the Rafah crossing, located at the Palestinian territory's southern border with Egypt, which was only reopened at the beginning of February. The corridor is critical for Palestinians to seek medical aid.

Israel announced the closure of the Rafah crossing, located at the Palestinian territory's southern border with Egypt, which was only reopened at the beginning of February —PTI

Palestinian media reported on Sunday that Israeli authorities also decided to close West Bank crossings, except for essential workers holding permits to exit through the Eliyahu, Tarqumiya and Qalandia crossings.

Human Rights Watch stated in a February report that Israeli restrictions had continued to cause shortages of medicines, reconstruction equipment, food, and water inside the strip, despite the ceasefire deal which was to allow aid into the region. —*Agencies*

A man inspects a car damaged after a Pakistani strike on a refugee camp in Takhta Pul district, Kandahar province, Afghanistan —PTI

Operation against Afghan Taliban continuing: Pakistan Minister

ISLAMABAD, 1 MAR

Pakistan's Parliamentary Affairs Minister Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry dismissed claims, stating the operation against the Afghan Taliban was ongoing.

Pakistan launched an operation Thursday night after Taliban operatives attacked 53 sites along the 2,600 km border, targeting military positions with airstrikes.

Pakistan Information Minister Attaullah Tarar said security forces killed 352 Taliban fighters, injured 535, destroyed 130 military posts, and captured 26 border posts.

Tarar also said that 171 tanks and armoured vehicles have been destroyed, adding that Pakistan also hit 41 locations "with precision air strikes".

Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that women fighter pilots led strikes on Kabul and Kandahar.

Earlier, Afghan officials claimed they shot down a Pakistani fighter jet, but authorities have denied the claim. —*PTI*

‘India to buy Russian oil if US-Iran conflict drags on’

On 28 Feb, Iran’s media said that it closed the Strait of Hormuz

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

With crude stocks sufficient for 10 days and fuel reserves for another 5–7 days, India is unlikely to face any immediate disruption; however, officials said prolonged conflict could prompt increased purchases of Russian oil.

in oil supplies from the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, officials said.

Even as rapidly unfolding developments, following US and Israeli military strikes on Iran, New Delhi has contingency plans in place should tensions escalate, top officials and analysts said.

Iran’s state media said on 28 February that the Islamic Republic has shut the Strait of Hormuz — one of the world’s most critical energy chokepoints through which about a fifth of global oil and gas supplies transit — in response to US and Israeli missile strikes.

The closure for a short duration will not have much impact on India as it already has supplies to meet fuel requirements, they said, adding that in the event of a prolonged disruption or closure of the narrow Strait of Hormuz, the country can recalibrate imports, tapping into its diversified supply sources, including increasing purchases of Russian oil.

The immediate fallout is expected to be reflected in oil prices. Brent crude closed the week near seven-month highs at around $73 per barrel, after rising roughly 16 per cent since the start of the year. Traders are bracing for heightened volatility next week, with some models pointing to prices moving towards $80 a barrel if supply flows are disrupted or face credible threats.

India imports 88 per cent of its crude oil and about half of its requirement of natural gas and cooking gas LPG.

Meanwhile, the Indian Rice Exporters Federation, in an advisory to its members on Sunday, asked exporters to switch, wherever possible, to free on board (FOB) terms — a structure under which the international buyer bears freight, insurance and related risks so that Indian exporters are not left exposed to runaway costs on fixed-price contracts. *—PTI*

Haifa Port secure amid US-Iran war, says Adani Group

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

The Adani group on Sunday said its Haifa port in Israel is fully secure and in operational condition amid heightened military conflict in Iran.

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone said all employees are safe, and all port assets and infrastructure are fully secure.

The US and Israel on Saturday launched a military operation against Iran, killing its Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. In retaliation, Iran has launched missile and drone attacks on Israel, including at Haifa. “Haifa Port Company confirms that all its employees are safe, and all port assets and infrastructure are fully secure and in operational condition,” the statement said. It, however, did not say if any of Iranian drones or missiles had hit the port.

The port authority continues to monitor the situation and is in close coordination with the Ministry of Transport and Road Safety of Israel, and is operating as per their instructions. “We remain committed to ensuring the safety of our people and the continuity of operations, maintaining stability for Israel’s supply chain and international trade,” it added. *—PTI*

Markets likely to fall due to Middle East tension: Analysts

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

Stock markets will react negatively on Monday due to the escalating crisis in the Middle East, and the impact on equities will depend on how long the conflict lasts, analysts said.

The US and Israel attacked Iran on Saturday. Iranian state media confirmed early Sunday that Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was killed in the attack. Besides, geopolitical situation, macroeconomic data announcements, global market trends, and trading activity of foreign investors would also influence investors’ sentiment in a holiday-shortened week ahead. Equity markets would remain closed on Tuesday for Holi.

Sentiment has turned even more fragile after fresh geopolitical escalations over the weekend in the Middle East, Santosh Meena, Head of Research at Swastika Investmart Ltd, said.

“For an oil-importing economy like India, sustained elevated crude prices pose risks to inflation, fiscal balance, and rate-cut expectations. This external shock has emerged at a technically vulnerable moment for the market,” Meena said.

Looking ahead to Monday’s trade, markets are likely to open with a cautious to negative bias amid geopolitical overhang and elevated crude prices, he noted.

Over the medium term, the impact on the market will depend on how long the conflict lasts, Vijayakumar said.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,527.52 points or 1.84 per cent, and the Nifty declined 392.6 points or 1.53 per cent. *—PTI*

DRIVEN BY INDIA-US DEAL

FPIs inflow hit 17-month high at ₹22,615 crore in February

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) infused Rs 22,615 crore into Indian equities, marking the highest monthly inflow in 17 months, driven by the interim India-US trade deal, correction in domestic market valuations and robust third-quarter corporate earnings.

The latest buying follows three consecutive months of heavy selling. FPIs pulled out Rs 35,962 crore in January, Rs 22,611 crore in December and Rs 3,765 crore in November, according to data from the depositories.

Overall, FPIs have withdrawn a net Rs 1.66 lakh crore (USD 18.9 billion) from Indian equities in 2025, making it one of the worst periods for foreign flows. The outflows were triggered by volatile currency movements, global trade tensions, concerns over potential

US tariffs and stretched equity valuations.

According to the data, FPIs invested Rs 22,615 crore in February. This was the highest monthly inflow since September 2024, when they had invested Rs 57,724 crore.

“The inflow was driven by secondary market buying, signalling renewed foreign confidence post-2025 outflows,” said Vinit Bolinjkar.

Javed Khan said three key catalysts supported the inflow. “These included India-US trade agreements and corrections in India’s market valuation. Additionally, Q3 FY26 earnings grew 14.7 per cent, suggesting confidence in the growth narrative.”

Sectorally, FPIs were aggressive buyers in financials and capital goods, while continuing to pare exposure to the IT sector. “FPIs had sold heavily in IT stocks due to the Anthropic shock,” said VK Vijayakumar. *—PTI*

INDIA’S FOREX RESERVES FALL $2.11B TO $723.6

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

A India’s foreign exchange reserves decreased by $2.119 billion in the week ending 20 February, falling to $723.608 billion, after recently hitting a new all-time high, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

The decline was mainly driven by reductions in gold reserves and foreign currency assets. Over recent weeks, the forex reserves had been on an upward trend, reaching a record high of $725.727 billion in February. For the week ending 20 February 20, India’s foreign currency assets, the largest component of reserves, stood at $572.564 billion, down $1.039 billion. Gold reserves were valued at $127.489 billion, down $977 million from the previous week.

Following last month’s monetary policy review, the RBI stated that the country’s reserves were sufficient to cover more than 11 months of merchandise imports. The RBI also highlighted that India’s external sector remains resilient.

Data shows the forex reserves increased by around $56 billion in 2025, compared to a rise of $20 billion in 2024 and a $58 billion increase in 2023, contrasting with a $71 billion decline in 2022. The RBI manages liquidity by intervening in currency markets to prevent rupee depreciation, buying dollars when the rupee is strong and selling when it weakens. *—PTI*

GST MOP-UP GROWS OVER ₹ 1.83 LAKH CRORE

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

Gross GST collection increased 8.1 per cent to over Rs 1.83 lakh crore in February, led by higher growth in revenues from imports.

Gross domestic revenue rose 5.3 per cent to about Rs 1.36 lakh crore, while gross import revenue climbed 17.2 per cent to Rs 47,837 crore.

Total refunds were up 10.2 per cent at Rs 22,595 crore.

Total net Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection stood at over Rs 1.61 lakh crore, up 7.9 per cent year-on-year.

Net cess revenue was Rs 5,063 crore, down from Rs 13,481 crore in February last year. *—PTI*

‘3 semicon plants to start ops in 2026’

GANDHINAGAR, 1 MARCH

Union Minister for Electronics and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw on Sunday said three more semiconductor plants will go into commercial production in India in 2026.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday inaugurated the Micron Assembly, Test, Marking, and Packaging (ATMP) facility in Sanand, Gujarat. This landmark event, marking the commencement of commercial production, signifies a historic milestone in India’s journey toward global technology leadership.

In just four years, since the launch of India Semiconductor Mission in 2021, India has transformed its semiconductor journey from vision to reality. To support this vision, government had announced a Production Linked Incentive scheme. India now has 10 approved semiconductor projects across six states. Semiconductors are at heart of modern technology. *—PTI*

Top 9 firms’ mcap falls by ₹2.18L crore

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

The combined market valuation of nine of the top-10 most valued firms eroded by Rs 2,18,902.09 crore last week, with Bharti Airtel taking the biggest hit in line with a bearish trend in equities.

Last week, the BSE benchmark tanked 1,527.52 points or 1.84 per cent.

“Equity markets ended the week under notable pressure as persistent geopolitical tensions and weakness in technology stocks weighed on sentiment,” Ajit Mishra, SVP, Research, Religare Broking Ltd, said.

From the top-10 pack, Hindustan Unilever emerged as the only gainer, adding Rs 5,462.81 crore, taking its mcap to Rs 5,49,393.18 crore

The market valuation of Bharti Airtel tumbled Rs 55,852.12 crore to Rs 10,71,853.25 crore.

HDFC Bank’s valuation eroded by Rs 37,580.1 crore to Rs 13,65,659.38 crore.

The market valuation of Reliance Industries dropped by Rs 34,846.12 crore to Rs 18,86,832.66 crore, and that of Bajaj Finance tanked by Rs 20,316.41 crore to Rs 6,20,070.59 crore.

Tata Consultancy Services’ market capitalisation (mcap) slumped Rs 18,180.89 crore to Rs 9,53,872.59 crore.

The valuation of Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) dived Rs 14,990.24 crore to Rs 5,37,213.68 crore, and that of Larsen & Toubro fell by Rs 13,714.85 crore to Rs 5,88,837.39 crore.

State Bank of India’s mcap declined to Rs 11,09,520.23 crore. *—PTI*

Videocon case: NCLAT rejects personal plea

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

The National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) has dismissed petitions by Dhoot brothers, Rajkumar Nandlal and Pradeep Nandlal, challenging the initiation of personal insolvency proceedings over Videocon Industries’ default.

The insolvency process was triggered after State Bank of India (SBI) issued a demand notice of Rs 5,353.78 crore, as they were personal guarantors for Videocon’s loans.

A two-member bench upheld orders from the Mumbai NCLT in June last year, which directed insolvency against the brothers. The tribunal rejected their plea that SBI’s petitions were barred under limitations. The NCLT’s order was based on defaults in loan repayment by Videocon, with the brothers as guarantors, under Section 95 of the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code.

The brothers had challenged the NCLT orders, but the NCLAT dismissed their appeals, stating, “Both the appeals are dismissed.” The brothers were guarantors for loans taken by Videocon, which defaulted on a Rupee Term Loan and Working Capital Facility, leading to the insolvency proceedings. *—ANI*

Economic Cabinet clears IIFCL’s IPO plans: MD

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

India Infrastructure Finance Company Ltd has received the approval to proceed with its proposed initial public offer (IPO), with the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs clearing its listing on stock exchanges. The approval has already been conveyed by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management (DIPAM) to the company, IIFCL’s MD Rohit Rishi said. The Budget 2026-27 provides emphasis on disinvestment and asset monetisation. The proposed IPO forms part of the government’s broader disinvestment and capital market listing strategy for public sector entities. The authorised and paid-up capital of the company stood at Rs 10,000 crore and Rs 9,999.92 crore, respectively, as of March 31, 2025. IIFCL will play central role as a provider and catalyst of infrastructure finance. *—PTI*

TO BE ACTIVE TILL 2028

Some manufacturers can defer customs duty payment

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

The Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs (CBIC) on Sunday said the Eligible Manufacturer Importers (EMIs) scheme will be implemented from 1 April, and such importers can clear imported goods without paying customs duty at the time of clearance.

The deferred payment facility will be available to EMIs meeting prescribed criteria related to Customs and GST compliance, turnover, financial standing and past track record, a finance ministry statement said.

“This reform is expected to significantly improve ease of doing business, strengthen the compliance culture, promote wider participation in the AEO programme and provide a boost to domestic manufacturing,” the ministry said.

Existing AEO-T1 entities, including MSMEs, that fulfil the eligibility conditions are also eligible to participate in the scheme.

- Existing AEO-T1 entities, including MSMEs, that fulfil the eligibility conditions are also eligible to participate in the scheme. Applications under the EMI scheme can be submitted online from 1 March, on the AEO portal www.aeoindia.gov.in under the tab “Eligible Manufacturer Importer”.

“The facility will be available from 1 April, 2026, and will remain in force till 31 March, 2028,” it added.

Under this initiative, EMIs would be able to clear imported goods without paying Customs duty at the time of clearance. Instead, the applicable duty can be paid on a monthly basis as prescribed under the Deferred Payment of Import Duty Rules, 2016, helping manufacturers better manage cash flows and working capital.

The EMI scheme is designed as a trust-based facilitation measure, encouraging compliant manufacturers to benefit from simplified procedures while nudging them towards higher levels of compliance.

Applications under the EMI scheme can be submitted online from 1 March, on the AEO portal -- www.aeoindia.gov.in -- under the tab “Eligible Manufacturer Importer”. *—PTI*

Cancel ChatGPT: Users protest OpenAI’s Pentagon deal

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

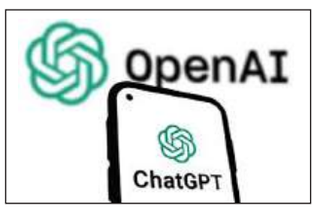
Sam Altman-led OpenAI recently signed an agreement with the US Department of War to deploy technology on the department’s classified network.

However, the move has sparked immediate backlash for the AI company with thousands of ChatGPT users sharing posts on Reddit claiming to be cancelling their ChatGPT subscriptions.

Posts titled ‘You’re now training a war machine. Let’s see proof of cancellation’, and ‘Time to cancel ChatGPT Plus after three Years. Anthropic got nuked for having ethics, and Sam Altman instantly swooped in for the Pentagon bag’ have received thousands of upvote on the platform.

Aidan Gold, an X user shared a post revealing the irony of how OpenAI, which backed Anthropic’s stand for AI safety, swooped in by submitting a bid to replace Anthropic in the Pentagon contract.

However, Altman insisted that the agreement includes stronger safety guardrails than those Anthropic refused to accept before being backlisted. In a blog post OpenAI shared excerpts of its contract language, highlighting clauses that prohibited the use of its AI models for mass domestic surveillance, fully autonomous weapons or high-stakes decision systems. *—Agencies*



- However, the move has sparked immediate backlash for the AI company with thousands of ChatGPT users sharing posts on Reddit claiming to be cancelling their ChatGPT subscriptions.

SA beat Zimbabwe by 5 wickets, to face NZ in semis

South Africa overcame Raza's show to all-win record

NEW DELHI, 1 MARCH

South Africa's Tristan Stubbs plays a shot during the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 cricket match between Zimbabwe and South Africa -PTI

Sikandar Raza singled-handedly kept Zimbabwe in the game with a special all-round performance before a shaky South Africa were able to steady the ship for a five-wicket win in their final Super Eights game of the T20 World Cup here on Sunday.

After opting to bat, Raza made a sublime 73 off 43 balls in an otherwise ordinary batting display as South Africa limited Zimbabwe to 153 for seven.After removing the dangerous duo of Aiden Markram and Quinton de Kock in his first two overs in the powerplay, Raza returned to dismiss a rampaging Dewald Brevis (42 off 18 balls), leaving the Proteas at 101 for five in the 11th over.

With another 53 runs needed and the odd ball keeping low, South Africa felt the pressure, but Tristan Stubbs (21 not out off 24 balls) and George Linde (31 not out off 21 balls) were able to get the job done in 17.5 overs.

Losing their first three wickets inside the powerplay, Brevis and David Miller did what they are known for to take the wind out of Zimbabwe's sails. A barrage of big hits, and all of a sudden, the momentum was back with South Africa. There were a few more hiccups in the run chase, but Stubbs and Linde ensured South Africa carry their unbeaten run into the semifinal against New Zealand in Kolkata. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, lost all three of their games in the Super Eights phase after topping the group stage.

Despite the loss, Raza stole the show in the afternoon game at Ferozshah Kotla.The Zimbabwe captain got the fours and sixes at will while the other batters struggled to find the same flow against high quality pace attack.

The batters, barring Raza, tried to attack the likes of Kwena Maphaka, Anrich Nortje, and the in-form Lungi Ngidi but were unsuccessful.Maphaka and Nortje are not even part of the usual South Africa eleven, with Kagiso Rabada, Marco Jansen, and Keshav Maharaj rested from the inconsequential game heading into the semifinal.Having done well to reach the Super Eights, Zimbabwe found it tough to replicate their league stage success against the bigger teams. Raza knows what they need to do to consistently challenge the established teams, but they are not there yet.

Power-hitting is a critical aspect of the shortest format, and the team needs more batters like Raza to put high-quality attacks under pressure.On Sunday, openers Tadiwanashe Marumani (7) and Brian Bennett (15) began well against left-arm spinner George Linde but could not force the pace against the pacers.

South Africa 154 for 5 (Brevis 42, Rickelton 31, Raza 3-29) beat Zimbabwe 153 for 7 (Raza 73, Maphaka 2-21) by five wickets. —PTI

Jayasuriya to quit as Sri Lanka head coach

Sanath Jayasuriya has decided to step down as Sri Lanka's head coach in the wake of his team's abysmal performance in the T20 World Cup. Co-hosts Sri Lanka lost all their games in the Super 8s stage. In the preliminary stage, they were beaten by Zimbabwe and recorded wins against Australia, the lowly Oman, and Ireland. "My contract ends in June, but I will go before that. I will be talking to Sri Lanka Cricket to decide my stepping down," Jayasuriya told reporters after Sri Lanka lost to Pakistan on Saturday.

"We should have done better, I am sorry, and I apologize to fans," Jayasuriya, the player-of-the-tournament when Sri Lanka won the 1996 ODI World Cup, said. He said Sri Lanka was badly hampered by the injuries to Wanindu Hasaranga, Matheesha Pathirana, and Kusal Mendis. "Their replacements could not perform to the levels required. Hasaranga was my best player, you can't easily find a replacement for him," Jayasuriya said, blaming both bowler and batter inconsistency for the poor show. Over the one-and-a-half years of his services, Sri Lankaimproved their rankings across formats, Jayasuriya said.

We did not take right decisions under pressure: Salman Ali

PALLEKELE, 1 MARCH

Pakistan captain Salman Ali Agha says they did not make the right decisions under pressure at the T20 World Cup, where they failed to perform to their full potential.

Pakistan defeated co-hosts and already-ousted Sri Lanka by a narrow five-run margin in their last Super Eight stage match, but that was not enough to book a place in the semifinals."If you see the entire tournament, we have underperformed.

In the 20-over game, we played 18 overs very well, and the other team was allowed to play two overs well. But, yes, our last three overs execution was not good."We have done better bowling than this in the past. We are a better bowling unit. We were missing our execution," Agha said at the post-match press conference on Saturday night.

The skipper took full responsibility for the below-par performance."...we will take full responsibility. Why not? Because we were involved in selecting the team, and we were responsible for the players.

I will take responsibility, and I'm sure the coach will also take," Agha said.

He said decision making under pressure situations was a big issue with Pakistan, which needs to be sorted out for better results in ICC events."And the same thing I told them, we have to make better decisions when we are under pressure.

Every game is very important because if you lose a game, it feels like you are out of the tournament. So, I think when you are under pressure, you have to make good decisions," Agha said.

"You get one chance in two years to leave an imprint of your country's cricket excellence, and you fail again. It is very disappointing to see all this," former captain and batting great Javed Miandad said on Sunday.

The batting maestro said the more he watched T20 cricket, the more he realised it is now a very methodical format, and the Pakistan players are not able to keep up with the other teams.

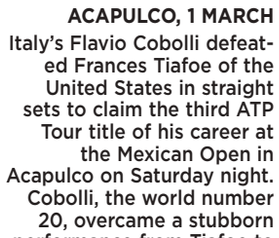
Miandad said the team's performance against the higher-ranked teams is a matter of great concern. —PTI

PTI

Cobolli downs Tiafoe in straight sets to win ATP

ACAPULCO, 1 MARCH

Italy's Flavio Cobolli defeated Frances Tiafoe of the United States in straight sets to claim the third ATP Tour title of his career at the Mexican Open in Acapulco on Saturday night. Cobolli, the world number 20, overcame a stubborn performance from Tiafoe to complete a 7-6 (7/4), 6-4 victory in two hours and nine minutes at the Arena GNP Seguros. Cobolli had taken a hard-fought first set on a tie break after Tiafoe saved a set point on his own serve at 5-4 down. He dominated the tie break, racing into a 6/4 lead and taking the set after Tiafoe slashed a forehand wide. Tiafoe was soon under pressure in the second set, suffering a break of serve to go 3-2 down before Cobolli held for a 4-2 lead. The Italian then looked poised to go ahead by a double break in the next game—PTI



PTI

Ronaldo misses his 966th goal despite Al-Nassr's win

DUBAI, 1 MARCH

Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo was unable to notch the 966th goal of his illustrious career after missing a penalty awarded to his Al-Nassr FC side during Saturday night's clash against Al-Fayha FC in the Saudi Pro League. The referee awarded Al-Nassr a penalty as early as the 9th minute after French defender Mohamed Simakan went down in the box following contact with an Al-Fayha defender. This decision quickly sparked controversy after the match. Analyst Saad Al-Kathiri told the Saudi daily Al-Jazirah that the referee had misjudged the situation and that the penalty should not have been given.—PTI

FIH Women's Hockey WC Qualifiers announced

HYDERABAD, 1 MARCH

Veteran goalkeeper and former skipper Savita Punia has opted out of Women's World Cup Qualifiers due to personal reasons, as Hockey India on Sunday named a 20-member squad, to be led by midfielder Salima Tete.

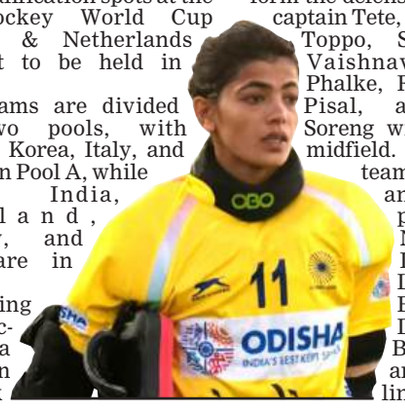
The FIH Hockey World Cup 2026 Qualifiers are scheduled to be held in Hyderabad from March 8 to 14. Hosts India, England, Scotland, Korea, Italy, Uruguay, Wales, and Austria will be competing for three qualification spots at the FIH Hockey World Cup Belgium & Netherlands 2026, set to be held in August.

The teams are divided into two pools, with England, Korea, Italy, and Austria in Pool A, while hosts India, Scotland, Uruguay, and Wales are in Pool B.

According to sources, Savita has taken a break for family reasons.

"Savita was not part of the national camp ahead of the tournament as she opted out due to family reasons. That's why there was no reason to consider her," a source told PTI.

Seasoned Salima will continue to lead the side. The squad comprises Bansari Solanki and Bichu Devi Kharibam sharing the goalkeeping responsibilities. Sushila Chanu Pukhrambam, Nikki Pradhan, Manisha Chauhan, Udita, and Ishika Chaudhary form the defensive unit, while captain Tete, Neha, Sunelita Toppo, Sakshi Rana, Vaishnavi Vitthal Phalke, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal, and Deepika Soreng will occupy the midfield. In attack, the team boasts flair and finishing prowess with Navneet Kaur, Ishika, Lalremsiami, Beauty Dungdung, Baljeet Kaur, and Annu in the lineup. —PTI



Cina clinches Maha Open ATP Challenger 75 C'ship

PUNE, 1 MARCH

Sixth seed Federico Cina saved five match points to edge past Britain's Felix Gill to win the Maha Open ATP Challenger 75 Men's Tennis Championship here on Sunday. In a thrilling contest lasting two hours and 29 minutes, Cina held his nerve in the decisive tie-break to prevail 6-3, 5-7, 7-6(1). The Italian looked in control after taking the opening set 6-3 with aggressive baseline play and solid serving. However, Gill fought back strongly in the second set, breaking at a crucial stage to level the match at one set apiece. The third set witnessed high-quality rallies and intense baseline exchanges, with neither player willing to concede ground. —PTI

HEALY QUITS ODI

Aus sweeps series 3-0 against India

SYDNEY, 1 MARCH

Captain Alyssa Healy bid adieu to ODI cricket on a glorious note, smashing a rampaging 158 as Australia whitewashed India 3-0 in the series with a 185-run thrashing of the world champion in the third and final match in Hobart on Sunday.

It was a fairytale ODI swansong for the 35-year-old Healy as her 158, and Beth Mooney's unbeaten 106, powered Australia to a mammoth 409 for seven after the host was asked to bat.

Chasing a massive target of 410, India was all out for 224 in 45.1 overs.

Healy will draw the curtains to her illustrious international career after playing the one-off pink-ball Test in Perth against India from March 6.

She has accumulated 3,777 runs from 126 ODIs, hitting eight centuries and 19 fifties.

Australia lost Phoebe Litchfield (14) early, but Healy and Georgia Voll (62 off 52) shared 134 runs for the second wicket to take Australia forward.

Alyssa Healy of Australia is given a guard of honour by India –PTI

Healy and Mooney then stitched 145 runs for the third wicket to hand Australia a launching pad for the big score.

Playing in her 126th ODI, Healy decorated her eighth ODI century with as many as 27 fours and two sixes from the 98 balls she faced. Voll hit seven fours and one six during her knock, while Mooney's knock was studded with 10 hits to the fence and one six.

Annabel Sutherland (23) and Nicola Carey (34 off 15) played well towards the end.

For India, Sneh Rana (2/66) picked up two wickets, while Shree Charani (2/106) became only the third bowler to concede 100-plus runs in an ODI.

India never really got going in its run chase as it lost wickets at regular intervals.

Australia 409 for 7 (Healy 158, Mooney 106*, Voll 62) beat India 224 (Rana 44, Rodrigues 42, King 4-33) by 185 runs. —PTI

Gukesh held by Navara in Prague Chess Festival

PRAGUE, 1 MARCH

World champion D Gukesh's hunt for his first victory continued as he was held to a draw by David Navara of the Czech Republic in the fourth round of the Prague International Chess Festival here.

On a day when Jorden van Foreest of Holland nosed ahead of the field with his third victory in four games, defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram went down fighting against Vincent Keymer of Germany.

Van Foreest defeated Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan, while the other two games in the 10-player round-robin tournament ended in draws.

American Hans Moke Niemann drew with Parham Maghsoodloo of Iran, and David Anton Guijarro got the same result against Nodirbek Yakubboev of Uzbekistan. With five rounds still to come and the event knocking on the doors of crossing the halfway barrier, van Foreest, on three points, is now followed by Abdusattorov and Navara, who in turn are a half point ahead of Yakubboev, Keymer and Guijarro. —PTI

PTI

Thailand MotoGP: Marco Bezzecchi wins season opener

DUBAI, 1 MARCH

Marco Bezzecchi won the MotoGP season-opening grand prix in Thailand from pole position on Sunday as defending world champion Marc Marquez retired late with a buckled wheel.

Aprilia's Bezzecchi led from start to finish to top the podium in Buriram, with KTM's Pedro Acosta second and Trackhouse's Raul Fernandez third.

Ducati's Marquez is chasing a record-equalling eighth world title this season, but he exited the race dramatically while in fourth place with five laps to go. The Spaniard, who started from second on the grid. —PTI

'TENSE AND SCARY'

We're safe: Sindhu, coach stuck in Dubai

HYDERABAD, 1 MARCH

Indonesian coach Irwansyah Adi Pratama, who trains two-time Olympic medallist P V Sindhu, had a narrow escape after an explosion occurred close to where they were stationed at Dubai Airport while travelling to Birmingham for the All England Championships.

Sindhu and Irwansyah were left stranded at Dubai International Airport after flight operations were suspended following escalating tensions in the Middle East. The tournament is scheduled to begin on Tuesday.

Sindhu, on Saturday night, detailed the tense moments on social media.

Explosions were reported across parts of the Gulf after Iran responded with a salvo of missiles, including in the United Arab Emirates' capital, Abu Dhabi, and in Dubai, prompting the suspension of all flights at Dubai airport.

"In Dubai at the moment, flights are getting cancelled. There was an explosion in airport, so we are stuck here at the moment," Irwansyah told PTI.

"They have put us in the hotel, we are okay, but again, there is a little bit of worry at the same time. We want to go to the All England. I hope we can fly out today because Sindhu's match is on Wednesday." "The ordeal continues to unfold, and the situation is becoming more frightening by the hour. A few hours ago, there was an explosion close to where we were holed up at the airport," she wrote on Instagram. "My coach had to quickly run out of the area as he was closest to the smoke and debris. It was an extremely tense and scary moment for all of us." —PTI

Kulkarni named head coach of Oman cricket team

DUBAI, 1 MARCH

Former Mumbai cricketer and coach Sulakshan Kulkarni was appointed the head coach of the Oman men's cricket team on Saturday.

Kulkarni, who was named deputy head coach of Oman in July last year, replaced former Sri Lanka captain Duleep Mendis at the helm.

"Duleep Mendis transitions to Chief Development Officer at Oman Cricket after 14 remarkable years at the helm, leaving behind a stellar legacy of historic milestones and taking Oman cricket to unprecedented heights.

His impact on the national team and the game's growth in the country is truly immeasurable," Oman Cricket said in a statement.

The 59-year-old Kulkarni has served as Mumbai, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu's head coach on the Indian domestic circuit.—PTI